THE RELATIONSHIP OF THEME AND STRUCTURE IN THE FICTION OF JOHN FOWLES

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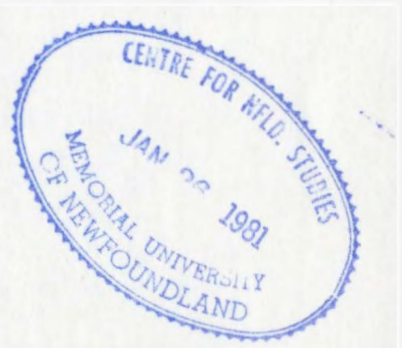
CENTRE FOR NFLD. STUDIES
JAN 26 1981
MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY
OF NEWFOUNDLAND

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THEME AND STRUCTURE IN THE FICTION OF JOHN FOWLES

by

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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October 1977

ABSTRACT

Although John Fowles has had immense success with the reading public he is still today generally dismissed by the critics as a talented and intelligent storyteller whose work lacks the necessary depth and complexity to be considered serious literature. However, in this thesis as each of the author's first four fictional publications (The Magus, The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman and The Ebony Tower) is examined in its own chapter, a discernible structural and thematic continuity emerges from all Fowles's work which indicates that these novels, despite their widely diverse subject matter and essentially romantic nature, are not empty thrillers and simple entertainments but instead are progressively more sophisticated and complex reworkings of one fundamental situation. All of John Fowles's works share six basic structural elements. First, each begins with a precisely fixed location of time and place. Second, the protagonist of each novel quickly shows himself to be alienated from his homeland and invariably he begins a solitary journey into a mythical or legendary world. Third, each protagonist undergoes an ordeal in this "other world" and by doing so experiences a spiritual reawakening. The next structural

element is that each protagonist then returns home to reconcile his old self with his newly-found perceptions. Fifth, each of these novels ends with a new beginning and, finally, whatever triumph each protagonist may achieve is always spiritual, self-contained, and seen primarily in existential terms. As each novel reworks these six structural elements into a progressively more complex version of the same basic situation a corresponding refinement and development become evident in the author's technical ability to control his work. For each successive novel uses two main thematic devices in an increasingly effective and improved manner. The first of these devices is the specifically physical layout of each novel through which the author innovatively presents his material in order to best reveal his theme to the reader. The second and more important thematic device which Fowles consistently uses and improves is the creation of one single image to develop the central motif in each book. Therefore, this thesis concentrates on an examination of Fowles's progressively developing structural and thematic techniques in order to show that his novels are serious literature which deliberately and consciously try to perfect the author's artistic vision.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Memorial University of Newfoundland for facilitating my research by awarding me a Memorial University Fellowship.

I also wish to thank my advisor, Dr. Phillip Gardner, for his advice and encouragement throughout the writing of this thesis.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the appearance of his first novel in 1963 John Fowles has risen from obscurity to become one of the best known and most widely read novelists in contemporary literature. Although he has only published four volumes of fiction (three novels and one collection of short stories) in the thirteen years since his career began, all have been enormously popular bestsellers. Fowles's gift for narrative and innovative presentation and his ability to maintain suspense through intricately plotted and emotionally tense fictional situations are well known. He is consistently praised for his outstanding technical control over his material. Yet, until the appearance of his third novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman, in 1969 reviewers and critics on both sides of the Atlantic seldom gave Fowles more than scant and hostile notice despite his success with the reading public. Even today Fowles is still generally dismissed as a talented and intelligent storyteller; an author who can spin an entertaining yarn, but one whose work lacks the depth and complexity necessary to be considered serious literature.

This lack of critical recognition is in large part due to the fact that at the present time critics are unaccustomed to finding worthwhile literature outside the

genre of realism. For, even though Fowles's fiction characteristically begins and ends with a precisely fixed location of time and place, the essentially romantic nature of his work cannot be overlooked - an English schoolteacher journeys to a remote Aegean island and is forced to begin a quest for his own humanity by an all-wise Greek millionaire and his two beautiful assistants; a psychopathic clerk wins a fortune on the pools and persecutes a fair damsel by putting her in his newly renovated dungeon; a Victorian aristocrat falls in love with a beautiful, enigmatic woman and then ignores history and social convention to pursue her into the future of his age; and, a happily married man finds the warmth and security of his bourgeois existence threatened as he begins to relive an old Celtic legend of one man's love for two women. But these stories are not traditional, escapist romances with happy endings. The schoolteacher's ordeal leads him to the brink of madness before finally leaving him alone and unsure of what, if anything, he has gained. The fair damsel slowly dies of pneumonia in her prison while vainly begging her captor to fetch her medical aid. The Victorian gentleman sacrifices his whole way of life only to find that the woman does not return his love, and the happily married man returns to his wife aware that both his freedom and his potential for significant change have been lost forever. Fowles's modern romances ambitiously turn the genre towards new conclusions and despite his widely

diverse subject matter a discernible structural and thematic continuity begins to emerge from all his work, which indicates that these novels are not mere entertainments but instead are progressively more sophisticated and self-conscious reworkings of one basic romance situation.

All John Fowles's fictions share six basic structural elements. Firstly, as was previously mentioned, all the author's work begins with a precisely fixed location of time and place which gives the reader the illusion of starting a realistic novel. Secondly, the protagonist of each work soon shows himself to be alienated from his homeland and invariably he begins a solitary journey into a timeless dimension of myth or legend far removed from the realm of ordinary social reality. It is in this romantic domain of infinite possibility where the main conflict of all Fowles's work is resolved. Thirdly, having been separated from his daily existence, each protagonist must turn inward to find the strength and determination needed to endure his ordeal. In so doing each defines the essential elements of his own being and consequently undergoes a spiritual reawakening. No longer alienated, the central characters next emerge from this mythic world to return to their realistic homes where they must reconcile their old selves with their newly-found romance perceptions. Fifthly, each of the author's works ends with a new beginning. Finally, whatever triumph the protagonists may achieve is always spiritual, self-contained.

and seen primarily in existential terms. The reader's last glimpse of the protagonist is always precariously affirmative. Their respective romantic quests have been essentially unsuccessful, but all have clearly gained a new faith in themselves which allows them to stoically persevere and optimistically look towards the future.

Fowles's brand of existentialism, when incorporated into these dramatic, fictional situations is intelligent, impressively presented, and unique. Yet, ironically, the author's lack of critical recognition has been caused almost as much by his reputation as an existentialist as by his artistic decision to write romances instead of realism. For, Fowles has published two non-fictional works of highly questionable merit and the first of these, entitled The Aristos: A Self-Portrait In Ideas, has come to be regarded by many critics and readers, despite its subtitle, as a fully developed, systematic statement of Fowles's existential beliefs. As such this work is certainly unimpressive. The ideas contained in it are for the most part derived from Heidegger and Kierkegaard and the other established existential philosophers of this century and it is not surprising that the critics who have tried to use this book as a key to understanding Fowles's other writings have come to suspect the value of all the author's work. In his introduction to the revised edition of The Aristos Fowles admits that he published this work "against the advice

of almost everyone who read it" and goes on to explain his decision by stating, "I am a writer; I want no more specific prison than that--I express myself in printed words. So a prime personal reason for this book was to announce that I did not intend to walk into the cage labelled 'novelist'".[1] As a statement of personal views which attempts to convey to the reader the scope and seriousness of Fowles's personal thought one must admit that The Aristos does have some legitimate value. But, as an attempt to establish himself as a serious writer in another medium besides fiction, it is certainly a failure. When asked in an interview if he would like to write something else in a philosophical vein, Fowles replied:

> No. That [The Aristos] wasn't really meant to be a book of philosophy, but unfortunately it came out rather like that, and it's described like that. The original subtitle was A Self-Portrait In Ideas. The notion I had was that if you put down all the ideas you hold, it would amount to a kind of painter's frank self-portrait. I now think the style it's written in is distinctly rebarbative. It's a difficult book to read. My hope was that people would read only little bits of it at a time, but I realize people don't read books like that any more.[2]

Similarly, Fowles's American publication of Poems by the now defunct Ecco Press in 1973 proved only self-defeating as an

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[1] John Fowles, The Aristos, Signet, N.Y., N.Y., 1970, p. 7.

[2] Daniel Halpern and John Fowles, "A Sort Of Exile In Lyme Regis," London Magazine, 10 March, 1971, pp. 41-42.

attempt to help him escape "the cage labelled novelist." Instead it has only served further to convince the reading public that his aptitude as a writer lies only in fiction. Although there are exceptions, the verse in this collection is generally of a disappointing quality. Consequently most of the important American reviews chose to ignore the book altogether and even Fowles himself was forced to admit in his Foreword to Poems that its publication can, primarily, only be justified as a means of learning more about Fowles the novelist.

> If publication is not the business of poets, then even more surely it is not self-exegesis. But since this collection must, after the fact of my published novels, have something of the air of an autobiographical footnote, I should like to say briefly where poetry sits in my writing life. . . . I have always found the writing of poetry, which I began before I attempted prose, an enormous relief from the constant play-acting of fiction. I never pick up a book of poems, without thinking that it will have one advantage over most novels: I shall know the writer better at the end of it. I do not have to hope this is true of what follows. I know it is true - and also how slender a justification mere personal truth is in writing . . .[3]

Perhaps when considering The Aristos and Poems one should not be so naive as not to recognize the important financial considerations of any widely sold publication, good or bad, to an author who must live on the proceeds from his writing. In any case, due to the obviously inferior quality of these

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[3] John Fowles, Poems, The Ecco Press (N.Y., N.Y., 1973), pp. vii, ix.

two works, they will not be considered further in this study and any examination of Fowles's existential philosophy, in particular, will be based solely on the fictional situations of each novel's central characters.

As each novel, in turn, reworks Fowles's six previously mentioned structural elements into a progressively more complex and sophisticated version of one basic romance situation a corresponding refinement and development also becomes evident in the author's technical ability to control his work by subtly revealing its theme. For, in each successive novel, Fowles uses two main thematic devices in an increasingly improved and effective way. The first and more obvious of these devices is the specifically physical layout of each novel through which the author innovatively presents his material in order to best reveal its individual theme to the reader. In his first book, The Magus (which was not published until after the release of his second novel) Fowles's craftsmanship, in this regard, leaves much to be desired. Yet, even here, one can see the beginning of Fowles's preoccupation with innovative presentation. The schoolteacher's quest for his own humanity is divided into three parts, of which all are prefigured by a quotation from Les Infortunes de la Vertu by the Marquis de Sade. In the first section, it is appropriate that the English schoolteacher, Nicholas Urfe, demonstrates his alienation from English society by being unable to participate in a

meaningful love relationship even though most of his pleasure in life is derived from sex. In the second section Nick journeys to the mythical domain of Bourani and at the end after undergoing many humiliations he finally finds himself in a de Sade-like situation - holding the cat'o nine tails in his hand as his beautiful deceiver is tied to a whipping post in front of him. In the third and final section Nick returns to his homeland and also like de Sade, tries in his own way to work out a new philosophy which can give his life some definite meaning and direction. In his second novel, The Collector, Fowles immediately shows his remarkable improvement in the use of this thematic device. The gradual breakdown in communications between the imprisoned damsel, Miranda, and her captor, Clegg, becomes chillingly realistic as the author first shows each incident from Clegg's point of view and then, through the discovery of Miranda's unfinished diary, shows Clegg and the reader exactly how Miranda felt about each of their various encounters. Next, in The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles's carefully chosen epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter, his extended pictorial descriptions of place and character, the tone of his narrative, and even his continual authorial intrusion masterfully create the illusion that one is reading a real Victorian novel; this adds new depth and complexity to this historical romance of Charles Smithson's quest for real love. Finally, in Fowles's most recent fictional work,

The Ebony Tower, the theme of David Williams's existential journey into Celtic romance is made more intense by the author's careful structuring of this novella along the same lines as Marie de France's medieval tale, Eliduc.

The second and more important thematic device which Fowles consistently uses in his work is the creation of one single image which develops the central motif in each novel. Not surprisingly it is again in Fowles's first novel, The Magus, where one finds the author's control of this second thematic device to be least perfect. In this book it is only the facts that the mythic domain on Phraxos is called Bourani (which means skull), and also that Maurice Conchis prefers his last name pronounced in the English manner with the "ch" soft, that metaphorically develop the central motif of Urfe's mental journey to the depths of his own consciousness. However, in his second novel, The Collector, Fowles once more demonstrates how quickly he learns to control his thematic devices. For the motif of growth in Miranda's spiritual awareness right up until the time she dies of pneumonia in her basement prison is almost perfectly reflected by Fowles's metaphor of a caterpillar emerging from its cocoon as a mature, beautiful butterfly only to die of asphyxiation inside a collector's killing bottle. Next, in The French Lieutenant's Woman it is Charles Smithson's passion for collecting fossils and studying evolution which metaphorically foreshadows how he himself has been naturally

selected for extinction by a quickly growing and aggressive middle class. For, Charles misunderstands Darwin's theory of evolution which forms the book's central motif, and falsely assumes that because he is upper class and educated he is consequently most fit to survive. Finally, in The Ebony Tower, it is the image of fully abstract, non-representational art as a flight from human and social responsibility which metaphorically emphasises why David Williams is unable to participate fully in Henry Breasely's Celtic domain.

In the course of this thesis, therefore, I shall concentrate on an examination of Fowles's progressively developing structural and thematic fictional techniques in order to show that despite both the essentially romantic nature of his work and the highly diverse subject material with which he deals, Fowles's novels are not just simple entertainments and empty thrillers, but instead are self-conscious and deliberate attempts to perfect his vision of a new kind of romance literature. I shall deal with Fowles only as a novelist despite the author's efforts to avoid this "label" for the simple reason that at the present time all Fowles's outstanding work has been done in this category. But, one should remember that today John Fowles is only fifty-one years old and, therefore, the value of his ultimate contribution to late twentieth century literature cannot be established at this time. Nevertheless Fowles's first four

fictional works The Magus, The Collector, The French Lieutenant's Woman and The Ebony Tower clearly contain sufficient continuity and development to merit a detailed study of these proportions.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MAGUS

Although The Magus was not published until 1966, three years after The Collector appeared in print, John Fowles consistently stresses in both his articles and interviews[1] that he regards The Magus as his first novel. Fowles began writing the first draft in 1953 and finished a substantial portion of it during that year. However, he ran into difficulty finding the right context and style in which to tell his "basic idea of a secret world whose penetration involved ordeal and whose final reward was self-knowledge"[2] and consequently work on the manuscript stopped. After unsuccessfully attempting to write several other novels the author returned to The Magus and finished a first draft in 1960. But this first version was still unsuitable for publication since there was a clear supernatural element

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[1]Daniel Halpern and John Fowles, "A Sort Of Exile In Lyme Regis," London Magazine, 10 March, 1971, p. 35.
John Fowles, "Notes On An Unfinished Novel," Afterwords: Novelists On Their Novels, ed. by Thomas McCormack, Harper & Row: N.Y., N.Y., 1969, p. 163.
John Fowles, Afterword to Alain - Fournier, Le Grand Meaulnes, trans. by Lowell Bair, Signet: N.Y., N.Y., 1971, p. 208.

[2]Daniel Halpern and John Fowles, "A Sort Of Exile In Lyme Regis," London Magazine, 10 March, 1971, p. 35.

underlying Nicholas Urfe's many adventures with Maurice Conchis which, in Fowles's opinion, simply did not work. So the author again abandoned this novel to try writing something else. Finally in a one month tour de force of almost 10,000 words a day Fowles wrote the first draft of The Collector and within another few weeks had it fully prepared for publication. Then, while enjoying The Collector's immediate success with the reading public, Fowles once again returned to The Magus, eliminated its troublesome supernatural passages and had it published as his second novel. In a recent letter the author further supports his contention that The Magus should actually be seen as his first work not only by saying that it would be "a little unkind" to assert that just a first draft of The Magus was written before The Collector since he regards "the first draft of any novel as nine tenths of the undertaking," but also because he feels The Magus must be considered his first novel both in "conceptual and emotional terms."[3] Indeed, it was during the thirteen long years of intermittent work on this book that Fowles developed, at least in embryo form, the structural elements and thematic devices which have dominated all his fiction to the present time.

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[3]John Fowles, letter to the present writer, 24 April 1976.

When The Magus appeared as Fowles's second publication the early reviewers, particularly those in England, strongly condemned the novel. Their hostile reviews focused primarily on the book's long and troublesome middle section in which the protagonist slips outside contemporary reality into Maurice Conchis's manipulated domain and begins a romantic ordeal designed to bring him to a new spiritual awakening. With considerable justification these critics accused Fowles of having self-indulgently overwritten this section out of all proportion to the rest of the novel. Furthermore, they pointed out how irritating it is to follow Nicholas Urfe through so many turns, twists and blind alleys in the plot, once it becomes apparent to the reader that whatever seems to be the most likely explanation of what is happening will soon be proven false and an even more fabulously contorted explanation will then be suggested. Consequently, this novel fails in their opinion, by becoming too centrally concerned both with preserving enigma and with creating an atmosphere of myth and mystery purely for its own sake. Since most of these critics had already read Fowles's well organized, tightly structured and economical writing three years earlier in The Collector, it is not surprising that they felt The Magus to be a considerably inferior work in terms of literary

craftsmanship. Yet, had they been aware of the strong case for approaching The Magus as Fowles's first work they might have given it a more favourable reception. For, despite the disproportionate length and the excessively opaque writing of the middle section, the book as a whole has many worthwhile attributes which have generally been given less attention than they deserve. For instance, the novel does create a powerful buildup of suspense as well as a strong emotional appeal by using a narrative which at times is truly spellbinding. The author's frequent evocations of time and place - the Edwardian age, the Greek landscape, scenes from both world wars - are eloquently described and vividly memorable. Most importantly, however, Fowles successfully maintains an impressive procession of knowledge throughout this long novel which finally culminates in a partially resolved yet highly provocative new beginning. Although this novel is usually considered to be the author's least perfect work one cannot help admiring the inexperienced young writer for having undertaken such an ambitious and complex first novel, and even its limited success is certainly a credit to the remarkable intelligence and talent which Fowles possessed right from the beginning of his career.

As was mentioned in the Introduction, the two characteristic thematic devices of all Fowles's fiction are

present in The Magus in only their most rudimentary and obvious forms. An examination of them here is certainly worthwhile both because it shows how the author's concern with innovative presentation and metaphorical development of theme began and also because it enables the reader to appreciate just how quickly Fowles developed and learned to control these technical aspects of his art in later novels. Yet, neither of these devices is sufficiently developed in this first work to increase significantly one's appreciation of the novel. Instead, the author's main achievement in this novel is that he was fully able to develop the six structural elements which form the one fundamental plot in all his romance fiction. Therefore, this chapter will be primarily concerned with examining these elements in more detail.

The three divisions into which The Magus is divided represent Fowles's first attempt to structure his material in a manner that helps reveal its theme. Through a quotation from Les Infortunes de la Vertu by the Marquis de Sade at the beginning of each section the author prefigures and emphasizes for the reader the most important aspects of his theme in each part of the novel. Consequently the epigraph at the beginning of Part One, "Un debauche de

profession est rarement un homme pitoyable".[4] (A professional failure is rarely a man to be pitied) is an appropriate introduction to this section since the protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, has been a failure in his profession and has quit his teaching job because of increasing cynicism and boredom with life. Unemployed in London, he now spends most of his time exploiting women by trying to make them pity his loneliness. In fact, however, Nicholas is not one of the rare professional failures who deserves pity. Instead he is simply a cad, in many ways a modern equivalent of de Sade's libertines, for his sexual encounters are not in an effort to achieve a meaningful relationship with another human being. Like other rakes, he is only concerned with immediate physical gratification and when his lust is satisfied he calculatingly ends each relationship without the least concern for the pain he may be inflicting upon another.

> Girls, or a certain kind of girl, liked me; I had a car - not so common among undergraduates in those days - and I had some money. I wasn't ugly; and even more important, I had my loneliness which, as every cad knows, is a deadly weapon with women. My "technique" was to make a show of unpredictability, cynicism and indifference. Then, like a conjurer with his white rabbit, I produced the solitary heart... There were sometimes a few tedious weeks of letters, but I soon put the solitary heart away,

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[4] John Fowles, The Magus, Dell Publishing Co., Inc. (N.Y., N.Y., 1968), p. 9. All further references to this novel will be taken from this edition.

> "assumed responsibility with my total being" and showed the Chesterfieldian mask instead. I became as neat at ending liaisons as at starting them.
>
> This sounds, and was, calculating, but it was caused less by a true coldness than by my dandyish belief in the importance of life style. I mistook the feeling of relief that dropping a girl always brought for a love of freedom.[5]

The protagonist's method of exploiting girls by first appearing isolated and lonely because of his cynicism and indifference and then, when his desires are satisfied, quickly getting rid of them again both by assuming responsibility with his total being and by declaring his love of freedom clearly indicates that Nicholas has based much of his life style on the central premises of existential philosophy. Significantly, a discussion of Nick's brand of existential thought appears in the first chapter of the novel.

> We formed a small club called Les Hommes Révolté, drank very dry sherry, and (as a protest against those shabby dufflecoated last years of the forties) wore dark gray suits and black ties for our meetings; we argued about essence and existence and called a certain kind of inconsequential behavior existentialist. Less enlightened people would have called it capricious or just plain selfish; but 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 feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behavior. We duly felt the right anguishes. Most of us, true to the eternal dandyism of Oxford,

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[5]Ibid., p. 17.

> simply wanted to look different. In our club, we did.[6]

Consequently, despite Nicholas's attraction to the outward manifestations of an existential lifestyle, it becomes obvious that the protagonist has never really understood the true meaning of this philosophy. His isolation and loneliness are merely a posture he adopts to attract women and instead of being existentially free he is really trapped inside the role, which he is constantly acting, of a French novel's anti-hero. He is unaware of his real freedom of choice and action outside his youthful posture as an existentialist, and he does not understand that real existential freedom brings with it a corresponding responsibility. Nicholas represents the existentially unconscious, modern man and his behavior, in reality, is just capricious, selfish, cynical and bored. He wants to be a poet and a lover but even he realizes that first he must discover something to make his everyday life more meaningful.

> I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery.[7]

So Nick goes to the British Council and applies for a job teaching English in Greece. Later that same day he also

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[6]Ibid., p. 13.

[7]Ibid., p. 15.

goes to a party in the apartment below his own and meets an Australian girl named Alison.

At first it appears that Nick's relationship with this girl will be exactly like the other relationships the protagonist is used to having. Alison is merely an ordinary young woman although she appears fully alive and has a natural aura of sexuality about her. At times she can be beautiful but at other moments she appears both crude and ugly. In typical fashion Nicholas picks her up and the two of them spend the night together in his upstairs apartment. Only the next morning does it become apparent that, unlike Nicholas's other conquests, Alison is an astute judge of the men with whom she becomes involved. As soon as she awakens she says to him,

> "You're the affaire de peau type. You're already thinking, how the hell am I going to get rid of this stupid Australian slut."[8]

and, as time passes she continues to demonstrate her understanding of Nicholas's nature even more fully:

> She didn't fall for the solitary heart; she had a nose for emotional blackmail. She thought it must be nice to be totally alone in the world, to have no family ties. When I was going on one day in the car about not having any close friends - using my favorite metaphor: the cage of glass between me and the rest of the world - she just laughed. "You like it," she said. "You say you're isolated, boyo, but you really think you're different."[9]

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[8] Ibid., p. 25.

[9] Ibid., p. 31.

Nicholas slowly realizes that his affair with Alison is like no other he has ever had. He was able to teach her many things out of bed, and in bed she reciprocated and did most of the teaching. They each had something to give and something to gain. Since they were both unemployed and alone in London, they were soon living together. One day as they passed their time in the Tate Gallery Nicholas had a fleeting moment of insight into his true feelings for Alison, but because of his firm belief in maintaining the outward role of an existential anti-hero he quickly confuses the truth in his own mind.

> Alison was leaning slightly against me, holding my hand, looking in her childish sweet-sucking way at a Renoir. I suddenly had a feeling that we were one body, one person, even there; that if she disappeared it would have been as if I had lost half of myself. A terrible deathlike feeling, which anyone less cerebral and self-absorbed than I was then would have realized was simply love. I thought it was desire. I drove her straight home and tore her clothes off.[10]

The weeks slip past as Nick and Alison continue to enjoy their affair and each other's continuous company. But when October finally arrives both of them begin to anxiously await the replies to their job applications. Alison receives the first reply and is offered a position as an airline stewardess. Nick knows that Alison would

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[10]Ibid., p. 32.

refuse the job if he asked her to stay with him, but he insists that he is not ready to settle down or commit himself in any way to another person. So they avoid a serious discussion of their future by planning how they can meet in Athens if Nick gets his job, and remind themselves that if he is refused in Greece they can continue to be together in London much of the time. Shortly afterwards, though, Nicholas's application to teach English at the Lord Byron School is accepted. Then it becomes impossible to avoid considering the future any longer. Alison, with her fully matured emotional integrity, is able to admit that she loves Nicholas but also understands him well enough to know that he will eventually leave her and go to Greece. Consequently she does not try to make him stay. Nicholas, however, lacking the spiritual freedom to choose a way of life which conflicts with his rigid existential image of himself, continues to deny his own humanity by refusing to communicate naturally and honestly with Alison.

> "If I say what I feel about you, will you..."
> "I Know what you feel."
> And it was there: an accusing silence.
> I reached out and touched her bare stomach. She pushed my hand away, but held it. "You feel, I feel, what's the good. It's what we feel. What you feel is what I feel. I'm a woman."
> I was frightened; and calculated my answer.
> "Would you marry me if I asked you?"
> "You can't say it like that."
> "I'd marry you tomorrow if I thought you really needed me or wanted me.
> "Oh Nicko, Nicko." Rain lashed the windowpanes. She beat my hand on the bed between us. There was a

long silence.

* * *

In the end she spoke, in a voice that tried to be normal, but sounded harsh.

"I don't want to hurt you and the more I ... want you, the more I shall. And I don't want you to hurt me and the more you don't want me the more you will." She got out of bed for a moment. When she came back she said, "We've decided?"

"I suppose."

We said no more. Soon, too soon, I thought she went to sleep.[11]

Consequently, due to his lack of understanding and his selfishness Nick continues to reject his moral and human responsibility to accept the love that exists between them. Unable to match Alison's emotional integrity he turns his back on the two qualities which he needs to make his ordinary life meaningful - love and honesty. Soon afterward he leaves London to try and find life's meaning in a new land.

The thing I felt most clearly, when the first corner was turned, was that I had escaped. Obscurer, but no less strong, was the feeling that she loved me more than I loved her, and that consequently I had in some indefinable way won. So on top of the excitement of the voyage into the unknown, the taking wing again, I had an agreeable feeling of emotional triumph. A dry feeling; but I like things dry. I went towards Victoria as a hungry man goes towards a good dinner after a couple of glasses of Manzanilla. I began to sing, and it was not a brave attempt to hide my grief but a revoltingly unclouded desire to sing.[12]

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[11] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[12] Ibid., p. 44.

The first of Fowles's six basic structural elements is, as was mentioned in the Introduction, that all the author's work begins with a precisely fixed location of time and place which gives the reader the illusion of having started a realistic novel. At this point in The Magus Fowles has completed this first structural element of his plot. One knows that the year is 1952; that Nick applied for his teaching job in early August; and that since that time he and Alison have lived together in a third floor flat at London's Russel Square. Now it is early October and considering how much the protagonist seems to belong to the world of the real and ordinary, it seems highly unlikely that any reader would suspect that this novel is about to slip from realism into romance. Yet, now that the protagonist has shown himself to be alienated from his own society and has begun this solitary journey, the rest of this section and much of Part Two is now centrally concerned with the author's second structural element, which is to let the narrative slip away from contemporary social reality and then to lead the protagonist into a timeless dimension of myth or legend.

> With no company but my own boredom, I began for the first time in my life to look at nature, and to regret that I knew its language as little as I knew Greek. I became aware of stones, birds, flowers, land, in a new way, and the walking, swimming, the magnificent climate, the absence of all traffic - ground and air, for there wasn't

> a single car on the island, there being no roads outside the village, and airplanes passed over not once a month - these things made me feel healthier than I had ever felt before.[13]
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> * * *
>
> When Alison's letters stopped, I was also increasingly isolated in a more conventional way. The outer world, England, London, became absurdly and sometimes terrifyingly unreal. The two or three Oxford friends I had kept up a spasmodic correspondence with sank beneath the horizon. I used to hear the B.B.C. Overseas Service from time to time, but the news broadcasts seemed to come from the moon, and concerned situations and a society I no longer belonged to, while the newspapers from England became more and more like their own one hundred years ago today features. The whole island seemed to feel this exile from contemporary reality. The harbor quays were always crowded for hours before the daily boat from Athens appeared on the northeastern horizon; even though people knew that it would stop for only a few minutes, that probably not five passengers would get off, or five get on, they had to watch. It was as if we were all convicts still hoping faintly for a reprieve.[14]

Since Nick still refuses to relate to those around him in a natural and emotionally honest way when he arrives in Greece, he continues to destroy what remains of his own humanity. During the Christmas vacation he goes to Athens with Demetriades (the only friend he has made at the Lord Byron School), and pays a whore to give him the sexual pleasure which Alison would have gladly given him with real human affection. When the winter term begins he finds to his dismay that he has contracted syphilis. Also, Nick

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[13] Ibid., pp. 48-49.

[14] Ibid., p. 52.

spent a lot of his time writing poetry during his first winter in Greece and he had begun to dream of literary success,

> But then, one bleak March Sunday, the scales dropped from my eyes. I read the Greek poems and saw them for what they were; undergraduate pieces, without rhythm, without structure, their banalities of perception clumsily concealed under an impasto of lush rhetoric. In horror I turned to other poems I had written - at Oxford, in S --. They were no better; even worse. The truth rushed down on me like a burying avalanche. I was not a poet.[15]

Thus, Nicholas has now lost even that part of him which was the lover and the poet. Having been reduced to such absolute nothingness he begins to loathe himself and finally decides to commit suicide. The day before the winter term ends he borrows an old gun from the gatekeeper at the school and goes to the island's central ridge to shoot birds. He finds a place and looks down the barrel of the gun, but when the moment to pull the trigger arrives he cannot do it.

> All the time I felt I was being watched, that I was not alone, that I was putting on an act for the benefit of someone, that this action could be done only if it was spontaneous, pure, isolated - and moral... It was a Mercutio death I was looking for, not a real one. A death to be remembered, not the true death of a true suicide, the death obliterate.
>
> And the voice; the light; the sky.
>
> It began to grow dark, the siren of the receding Athens boat sounded, and I still sat smoking, with the gun by my side. I re-evaluated myself. I saw that I was from now on, forever, contemptible. I had been, and remained, intensely false; in

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[15] Ibid., p. 53.

> existentialist terms, unauthentic. I knew I would never kill myself, I knew I would always want to go on living with myself, however hollow I became, however diseased.[16]

At this low point in the protagonist's life the first section ends.

The middle section of The Magus is also prefigured by an epigraph from Les Infortunes de la Vertu and again one is reminded of the author's early thematic concern with a physical layout of his material which helps reveal the work's central theme to the reader.

> Irrités de ce premier crime, les monstres ne s'en tinrent pas là; ils l'étendirent ensuite nue, à plat ventre sur une grande table, ils allumèrent des cierges, ils placèrent l'image de notre sauveur à sa tête et osèrent consommer sur les reins de cette malheureuse le plus redoutable de nos mystères.
>
> (Aroused by their first crime the monsters did not stop there. They stretched her naked and flat on a large table. They lit wax candles. They took the image of the savior and placing it near her head, desecrated upon her loins the most solemn of mysteries.)[17]

This is indeed an appropriate introduction to this section of the book since Nicholas Urfe is now about to undergo many cruel and humiliating experiences in Maurice Conchis's mythical world until Part Two finally culminates with the protagonist himself placed in a de Sade-like situation - holding a whip in his hand while the beautiful woman who

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[16] Ibid., p. 58.

[17] Ibid., p. 61.

has deceived him is tied before him on a whipping-frame.

The summer term begins at the Lord Byron School and Nick starts walking daily on the deserted side of the island to find some peace and solitude. Soon he notices that there are signs of life at a summer house on the island's most remote point and his curiosity causes him to investigate further. While he swims near this cottage he gets the distinct feeling that he is being watched and then he finds a book of poetry, with certain passages marked, lying on the shore. As mystery begins to surround him, Fowles continues to develop the second structural element of his fundamental romance plot. Towards the end of Part One the author removed Nicholas from the reality of London's Russell Square and convincingly conveyed a sense of the protagonist's increasing remoteness from that world when he arrived in Greece. Now, in this section, Fowles gradually lures his protagonist into the timeless, mythic world of Bourani and as he does so he quickly points out that even though Nick has not seen Alison for more than half a year, he still cannot forget her.

> I knew that on this island one was driven back into the past. There was so much space, so much silence, so few meetings that one too easily saw out of the present and then the past seemed ten times closer than it was. It was likely that Alison hadn't given me a thought for weeks, and that she had had half a dozen more affairs. So I posted the letter as one throws a message in a bottle in the sea. Not as a joke, perhaps,

but almost; yet with a kind of ashamed hope.[18]

Fowles undoubtedly has overwritten the many mysterious occurences in this section which eventually cause Nick to fully participate in Conchis's masque. Yet, to give the author his due, it should be noted that the protagonist is the type of person least likely to be easily absorbed into this romantic world. Nick's cynicism, selfishness and overly cerebral approach to life combine to make him a natural violator of myths. Consequently, since the protagonist is cautious of being drawn into illusions, Fowles did have to write a considerable number of incidents in order to convincingly make him yield to this world and join the masque.

When Conchis and Nicholas meet for the first time Fowles's earliest attempt to effectively use his second and more important thematic device becomes apparent. In each book the author creates one single image to help develop his central motif. Not surprisingly it is in this first work that Fowles's control of his second thematic device is also the least perfect. For, in The Magus this image is only developed by two relatively insignificant things. The first is that Conchis asks Nicholas to pronounce his name as if it were English instead of Greek.

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[18] Ibid., p. 72.

> "How do you know who I am, Mr. Conchis?"
> "Anglicize my name. I prefer the ch soft." He sipped his tea, "If you interrogate Hermes, Zeus will know."[19]

Secondly, Maurice Conchis carefully stresses the meaning of the word Bourani as he shows Nick around his property.

> "The Albanians were pirates. Not Poets. Their word for this cape was Bourani. Two hundred years ago it was their slang word for gourd. Also for skull.[20]

Thus the words "conscious" and "skull" metaphorically develop, albeit in a rather obvious way, The Magus's central motif of Nicholas Urfe's mental journey to the depths of his own being.

Also during this first encounter Conchis makes his first of several references to Shakespeare's The Tempest and as the plot develops it becomes clear that this famous romance is of major importance as a source for The Magus.

> He went on before I could answer. "Come now. 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. Urfe."[21]

Like Prospero, Conchis lives on an island where he has the ability to control and manipulate every aspect of other

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[19]Ibid., p. 76.

[20]Ibid., p. 80.

[21]Ibid., p. 79.

people's lives. Also, Conchis has two beautiful twin god-daughters who, like Miranda, show their "father" complete respect and obedience. Nicholas, of course, tries to assume the role of Ferdinand in this masque, but due to his promiscuous sexuality he is in reality cast as Caliban. As in The Tempest the main conflict in this section proves to be the opposition between Caliban's nature and Prospero's art and, also like The Tempest, their conflict is ultimately designed to show evil redeemed, a rebirth and a return to life.

Another source of considerable importance to The Magus is Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes as Fowles himself points out in his afterword to Lowell Bair's recent English translation of that novel.

> It [Le Grand Meaulnes] is also a book I can't myself speak about very objectively, since I wrote my own first novel, The Magus, very powerfully under its influence. To read it is still for me much closer to a physical than a literary experience; and I feel for Fournier himself something like a blood relationship. He is a brother, in both old and new senses of that phrase.[22]
>
> * * *
>
> Phrases like the domaine perdu (the lost domain) and the pays sans nom (more difficult to translate, since pays means both a whole country and a small district - let's say "the landscape without a name")

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[22] John Fowles, Afterword to Alain-Fournier Le Grand Meaulnes, trans. by Lowell Bair, Signet Classics (N.Y., N.Y., 1971), p. 208.

> have achieved almost Jungian status in the Western unconscious. But he described far more than a certain kind of archetypal landscape or emotional perspective on it, though they are obvious evokers of his world.[23]

* * *

> (The most famous of his [Alain-Fournier's] self commentaries and - may I add - my own secret and perpetual motto on the wall during the writing of The Magus) "I like the marvellous only when it is strictly enveloped in reality."[24]

Many of the main aspects of Conchis's domain, as well as the tone and manner in which Fowles presents the more marvellous moments during the elaborate masque clearly reflect the author's debt to Fournier's classic. Even Nick's desire both to keep outsiders away from his world and to keep Conchis's masque going at any cost, are very similar to Meaulnes's own reaction when he inadvertently comes upon Yvonne de Galais and her lost domain.

A large number of other references to literature are also found in this section of the novel. Quotations from T.S. Eliot, Auden and Ezra Pound prefigure Nick's spiritual quest. E.M. Forster's Howards End is indirectly mentioned. Nick is compared to Iago during the trial scene. The list goes on and on. Moreover, Fowles's impressively wide variety of references to the occult, fine

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[23] Ibid., p. 209.

[24] Ibid., pp. 222-223.

art, classical mythology and music abound in this section. Although all of these references certainly add to the richness of the narrative, only The Tempest and Le Grand Meaulnes emerge as sources which contributed a significant shaping force to Fowles's own first novel.

As Nick becomes progressively more caught up in Conchis's fantasies, the romance of his extraordinary adventure at Bourani begins to counteract his cynicism, boredom and sense of meaninglessness. Those aspects of his personality which had been the poet and the lover start to re-emerge as his dominant character traits and soon the protagonist finds himself glad to be alive once more.

> I lit a cigarette, and after a while I smiled. In that small bare room, it seemed not to matter, even if I was a shade scared. The truth was that I was full of a sort of green stir. Conchis was no more than the chance agent, the event that had come at the right time; just as in the old days, I might, after a celibate term at Oxford, have met a girl and begun an affair with her; I had begun something exciting with him. It seemed linked in a way with my wanting to see Alison again. I wanted to live again.[25]

So, Nick decides to accept a limited and highly sceptical role in the play. Shortly after this Conchis indicates to the protagonist that the play's fantastic events may have value as a way of showing him how to make his life more meaningful. Conchis has already told Nick that he envies him since all

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[25] The Magus, p. 98.

his discoveries are still to come, now he reminds Nick that he is still young enough to change and improve if he really wants to.

> "It is what I mean by being fortunate. There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not any more 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.
> "Perhaps."
> "Not perhaps. For certain."
> "What happens if one doesn't recognize the ... point of fulcrum?" But I was thinking, I have had it already - the silence in the trees, the siren of Athens boat, the black mouth of the shotgun barrels.
> "You will be like the many. Only the few recognize this moment. And act on it."[26]

The weekend visits to Bourani continue and eventually Nick begins to understand that what Conchis has said is true. No significant change has taken place in his life, but he at least begins to recognize that his potential for self-improvement still exists.

> Conchis had spoken of meeting his future, of feeling his life balanced on a fulcrum, when he first came to Bourani. I was experiencing what he meant, 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 fall into place, they 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

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[26] Ibid., p. 105.

> 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.[27]

Bourani's appeal for Nicholas soon becomes solidly based on his slowly developing relationship with the mysterious Julie (Lily) Holmes. At first she plays the role of Conchis's fiancée Lily Montgomery, who died during the first world war. Then she is cast as a schizophrenic who is fortunate enough to receive Maurice Conchis's undivided medical attention each summer. Next she becomes a talented young English actress who has gotten in over her head at Bourani and desperately needs Nicholas's help. She is beautiful. She cleverly acts and dresses like a prim young lady from the Edwardian age and she appears to also have a twin sister on the island. At first the protagonist's interest in her is purely sexual, but as time passes their intensely romantic situation charms even Nicholas, for the first time in his life, into wanting a real love relationship instead of just sex.

> I had always believed, and not only out of cynicism, that a man and a woman could tell in the first ten minutes whether they wanted to go to bed together; and that the time which passed after those first ten minutes represented a tax, which might be worth paying if the article promised to be really enjoyable but which nine times out of ten became rapidly excessive. It wasn't only that I foresaw a very steep bill

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[27] Ibid., pp. 159-160.

> with Lily; she shook my whole theory. She had a certain exhalation of surrender about her, as if she was a door waiting to be pushed open; but it was the darkness beyond that held me. Perhaps it was partly a nostalgia for that extinct Laurentian woman of the past, the woman inferior to man in everything but that one great power of female dark mystery and beauty: the brilliant, virile male and the dark, swooning female. The essences of the two sexes had become so confused in my androgynous twentieth-century mind that this reversion to a situation where a woman was a woman and I was obliged to be fully a man had all the fascination of an old house after a cramped anonymous modern flat. I had been enchanted into wanting sex often enough before; but never into wanting love.[28]

When Nicholas receives a telegram from Alison inviting him to spend the mid-term break with her in Athens he demonstrates that he is still too selfish and promiscuous to ever sustain a love relationship in the real world. In his usual calculated way he decides that he will go to Bourani over mid-term if he is invited, and if not he still has a weekend with Alison to fall back on. So, when Conchis tells Nick that he will not be at Bourani the following weekend the protagonist, despite his preference to be with Julie, decides to go to Athens. During the five days of classes before the break begins, however, Nicholas comes to realize how fully he has been won over by Conchis's mythical world. Each day he is unable to stop thinking about the events at Bourani and several evenings he walks back to Conchis's domain in the hope that the masque will be in progress. Without the

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[28]Ibid., pp. 228-229.

play he begins to feel like an addict without his drugs.

> I didn't try to pretend that I was anything else than almost literally bewitched by Bourani. It was almost a force, like a magnet, drawing me out of the classroom windows, through the blue air to the central ridge, and down there where I so wanted to be...
>
> After my last lesson I couldn't resist it. I had to go back to Bourani. I didn't know what I was going to say, but I had to reenter the domaine. As soon as I saw it, the hive of secrets lying in the last sunshine over the seething pinetops, far below, I was profoundly relieved, as if it might not have been still there...
>
> ...It was clear that no one was there. I walked back through the darkness, feeling depressed, and increasingly resentful that Conchis could spirit his world away like that, deprive me of it, like a callous drug-ward doctor with some hooked addict.[29]

Therefore, at this point in the novel, Fowles's second basic structural element is complete. The protagonist, having shown his alienation from the real world in Part One, has now fully completed his solitary journey into a timeless dimension of romance and myth, and is far removed from the realm of ordinary social reality.

The weekend in Athens now returns Nick briefly to the real world so that it is possible to re-evaluate the protagonist's relationship with Alison. At first it seems that Nick is learning to control his sexual calibanity for he starts to feel guilty about his plan to ruthlessly exploit Alison's emotions. Unfortunately he continues to reject his moral and human responsibility to communicate honestly with

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[29] Ibid., pp. 229-230.

her. Instead he resorts to his old methods of handling women; lying and evoking their pity. He decides to tell Alison that he cannot have sex with her because he has syphilis.

> Six days before it had not been too difficult to think of her as something that could be used if nothing better turned up; but two hours before changed my meanness into guilt. In any case, I no longer wanted sex with her. It was unthinkable - not because of her, but because of Lily. I wanted neither to deceive Alison nor to get involved with her; and it seemed to me that there was only one pretext that would do what I required: make her sorry for me and make her keep at arm's length.[30]

Since sex is out and Alison has visited Athens before they decide to spend the weekend walking up Mount Parnassus. They leave their separate hotel rooms early; get a key to a small hut near the top of the mountain and begin their day-long climb. At sunset they finally reach the mountain top and when they get back to the hut it is night and they are both close to exhaustion. While eating their meal around the wood stove Nick tries to resist his renewed sexual desire for Alison by thinking of Julie, but since climbing a mountain to spend the night in a shepherd's hut is something Julie would never do, it is difficult to evoke her image. Soon Alison decides that she loves Nick so much that she wants to have sex with him even if it means that she might get syphilis, and when she starts to seduce Nicholas he

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30. Ibid., pp. 231-232.

neither resists her, nor explains that he has become emotionally involved with another person. But the next day when they stop for a swim on their way down the mountain,

> It rushed on me, it was quite simple, I did love her, I wanted to keep her and I wanted to keep - or to find - Lily. It wasn't that I wanted one more than the other, I wanted both, I had to have both; there was no emotional dishonesty in it. The only dishonesty was in my feeling dishonest, concealing ... it was love that finally drove me to confess, not cruelty, not a wish to be free, to be callous and clear but simply love. I think in those few long moments, that Alison saw that. She must have seen something torn and sad in my face, because she said, very gently, "What's wrong?"
>
> "I haven't had syphilis. It's all a lie." She gave me an intense look, then sank back on the grass.
>
> "Oh Nicholas."
>
> "I want to tell you what's really happened."
>
> "Not now. Please not now. Whatever happened, come and make love to me."
>
> And we did make love; not sex, but love; though sex would have been so much wiser.[31]

Finally, back in Athens, Nick tells Alison the whole story of his adventures on Phraxos. Alison realizes that Nick's desire for both herself and Julie is not love at all but merely absolute selfishness.

> "I think you're so blind you probably don't even know you don't love me. You don't even know you're a filthy, selfish, bastard who can't, can't like being impotent, can't ever think of anything except number one. Because nothing can hurt you, Nicko deep down, where it counts. You've built your life so that nothing can ever reach you. So whatever you do you can say, I couldn't help it.

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[31] Ibid., pp. 255-256.

> You can't lose. You can always have your next adventure. Your next bloody affair.[32]

Yet, her emotional integrity remains so pure that she is still willing to give him her love if he will just accept the responsibility for his own actions involving her.

> "I've saved some money. And you can't be exactly broke. If you say the word, I'll walk out of my job tomorrow. I'll come on your island and live with you. I said a cottage in Ireland. But I'll take a cottage on Phraxos. You can have that. The dreadful responsibility of having to live with someone who loves you."[33]

But Nicholas refuses her offer. He has not really changed at all since the days in Russell Square. Again he has turned his back on love and honesty; the two qualities which could have given meaning to his life in the ordinary, real world. The next morning he finds that Alison has already left the hotel. After making a few half-hearted and unsuccessful attempts to contact her, he eagerly takes the island ferry back to his world of illusion.

In the remaining portion of the novel's second section Fowles develops the third basic structural element of all his plots--Nicholas begins to undergo the romantic ordeal which is ultimately designed to bring him to a new spiritual awakening. Before his trip to Athens the protagonist had already been charmed into wanting a love

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[32] Ibid., p. 260.

[33] Ibid., p. 262.

relationship with Julie and not just a sexual encounter. Since he has now rejected Alison's offer of real love in the ordinary world to continue his pursuit of Julie at Bourani, it becomes doubly important to him that the masque continues until his courtship is successful. In his room he finds a note which invites him to Bourani the following Saturday and, despite the large number of examination papers which he has to mark, he cannot resist a quick trip to the central ridge to reassure himself that this secret world is still there.

The following Saturday he meets Conchis leaving Bourani as he arrives and is delighted to hear that Julie is waiting for him at the house. As soon as he sees how elegant and beautiful she is he decides that he was right to have rejected Alison's offer and he takes advantage of Conchis's absence to arrange a secret meeting with her for that night. When they meet by the Poseidon statue Nick realizes, for the first time in his life, that he is hopelessly in love, and just as Alison wished that Nick would return her love in Athens, the protagonist now desperately wants Julie to want him. But instead it is now his turn to have his emotions exploited.

> She had abandoned all pretense, she was hot, passionate, she kissed with her tongue as prim 1915 could never have kissed. She let me have her body; met mine. I murmured one or two endearments, but she stopped my mouth. A torrent of feelings rushed through me; the knowledge that I was hopelessly in love with

> her. I had wanted other girls. Alison. But for the first time in my life I wanted desperately to be wanted in return.
>
> She stroked the side of my face, and I turned to kiss her hand; caught it; and brushed my lips down its side and round the wrist to the scar on the back.
>
> A second later I had let go of her and was reaching in my pocket for the matches. I struck one and lifted her left hand. It was scarless. I raised the match. The eyes, the mouth, the shape of the chin, everything about her was like Lily. But she was not Lily.[34]

Nick has now met June, Julie's twin sister. Although he suspects that Julie had never actually intended to meet him that night he tries to accept their prank with as much composure as possible.

That Sunday afternoon Conchis is again called away and amidst some detective work Nick has a conversation with Julie. This time he is careful to make sure that she has the scar on her wrist to prove who she is. Now she too leads him on sexually and then suddenly makes him stop.

> "What's wrong?"
>
> She spoke in a whisper. "When I was thirteen I was - well the stock euphemism is ..." her voice sank lower than the wind "... interfered with."
>
> It was like hitting an air-pocket; my mind plunged - some terrible wound, some physical incapacity ... I stared at the back of her head. She kept her face averted. "I've rationalized it and rationalized it, I know it's just biology. Mechanism. But I've ..." her voice trailed away.
>
> I kissed her shoulder through the fabric.
>
> "It's as if - with even the nicest men, men like you - I can't help suspecting that they're just using me. As if everyone else was born able

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[34] Ibid., pp. 292-293.

> to distinguish love and lust. But I wasn't." She lay curled up head on hand. "I'm so sorry. I'm not abnormal. If you could just be patient with me."[35]

Nick is now so thoroughly in love with her that he takes what she says quite seriously, but the irony of Julie saying both that only she cannot distinguish between love and lust and also that Nick is the nicest of men immediately causes the reader to suspect that Julie now may have a new role in the masque; to treat Nick with the same selfishness, lack of human concern and irresponsibility which the protagonist has always shown to women. Indeed, when Nick and Julie meet the following Wednesday night near a deserted chapel on the central ridge, the reader has more reason than ever to suspect that this is the case, for not only does she again sexually entice Nick and then abruptly cut him off by blowing a whistle to summon her negro guard, but also she makes an extremely revealing comment when Nick says that he loves her.

> I took her face in my hands and drew her a little towards me, then whispered the words again; begging her to believe.
>
> "I love you."
>
> She bowed her head, then pulled on her cardigan saying nothing, but standing so close that it said everything. I pulled her against me for a moment, and then she answered, in a voice so low I hardly heard.
>
> "I want you to love me."

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[35] Ibid., pp. 325-326.

> A last moment; then she ran past the Negro and through the trees towards the shingle of the beach.[36]

Moreover, the protagonist's thoughts at the end of this episode clearly show how easily love and lust still become confused in his own mind. He has no respect for each person's individuality. Instead he believes women are objects which can be molded and trained into whatever type of behavior he desires, regardless of their own personalities.

> As I climbed the long path through the trees I thought of Julie; of her body, her mouth, a feeling that in another few minutes she would have given way ... and my mind wandered lubriciously off to a Julie trained by familiarity, by love of me to do all these things that Alison did; all Alison's semi-professional skill with Julie's elegance, taste and intelligence.[37]

So far, of course, Nick's ordeal has not been very hard for him to bear. Although he realizes that a certain amount of deceit underlies most of his various dealings with Julie, the excitement and romance which these falsehoods provide have only served to captivate and intrigue him all the more with his mythic world. But, his ordeal rapidly becomes more unpleasant a few days later when he receives his mail at the Lord Byron School. To his horror he finds that Alison has committed suicide.

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[36]Ibid., p. 333.

[37]Ibid., p. 334.

> And Julie; she now became a total necessity. Not only marriage with her, but confession to her. If she had been beside me then, I could have poured out everything, made a clean start. I needed desperately to throw myself on her mercy, to be forgiven by her. Her forgiveness was the only possible justification now. I was tired, tired, tired of deception; tired of being deceived; tired of deceiving others; and most tired of all of being self-tricked, of being endlessly at the mercy of my own loins; the craving for the best, that made the very worst of me.[38]

Suddenly Nicholas has tired of deceit and illusion. Now he wants a real love affair with Julie. He wants to marry her and live in the ordinary world. The romance of Conchis's mythical world has started to fade from the masque and only illusion remains.

The next weekend after the masque has supposedly been dismantled Julie again tricks Nicholas by helping Conchis to lock him up alone in an old gun emplacement, and this time there is no intrigue and romance. Instead he is filled with frustration and rage. Finally both sisters combine to deceive and humiliate Nicholas much more ruthlessly than they have done before. June persuades him to walk her home to a hotel room on the island. When the protagonist is at last convinced that the masque has really ended June leaves and Nicholas finds himself alone with Julie. After sharing a bath they both return naked to the bedroom.

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[38]Ibid., p. 362.

"Do you want me?"
"I'm dying for you."
Then very quickly she slipped off the bed; ran to the door. I sat up.
"Julie?"
I saw her pale figure against the faint rectangle; watching me for a moment. Her right hand reached sideways. She spoke. The strangest voice, as hard as glass.
"There is no Julie"
There was the sound of her alien voice and a metallic click. For a fraction of a second I thought it was a joke, she was acting again, had accidently touched the key.
Then there was a violent cascade of events.
The door was flung wide open, the light came on, there were two black figures, two tall men in black trousers and shirts. One was the Negro and the other was "Anton". Joe came first, so fast at me that I had no time to do anything but convulsively grip the bedspread over my loins. I tried to see Julie, her face, because I still could not accept what I knew: that she had turned the key and opened the door.[39]

* * *

I tried to realize what I had gotten into: a world without limits.[40]

* * *

My head began to swim, faces and objects, the ceiling, to recede from present reality; down and down a deep black mine of shock, rage, incomprehension and flailing depths of impossible revenge.[41]

But, Nicholas's ordeal is not yet over. At this point Nick has only had his own inhumanity repaid to him in kind. Now he is subjected to a mock trial which eventually forces him to look at himself as he really is.

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[39]Ibid., p. 436.

[40]Ibid., p. 437.

[41]Ibid., p. 438.

All through this section Conchis has been giving Nick the basic principles of a philosophy which he will soon be able to use to help shape his new self. This has been done primarily through Nick's vicarious participation in the main events of Conchis's life and also through a few direct comments which Conchis has made to the protagonist. During their first meeting Maurice told Nick that if he simply accepts his existential isolation then it will become possible to live with it optimistically.

> "But you and I! We live, we are this wonderful age. We are not destroyed. We did not even destroy."
> "No man is an island."
> "Pah, Rubbish. Every one of us is an island. If it were not so we should go mad at once. Between these islands are ships, airplanes, telephones, television — what you will. But they remain islands. Islands that can sink or disappear forever. You are an island that has not sunk. You cannot be such a pessimist. It is not possible.[42]

Also, Conchis's story of the real Lily Montgomery during the First World War has suggested that it is impossible to find a meaningful love relationship if one runs away from life's unpleasantness; since rejecting responsibility is to deny one's own humanity. Just as Lily told Maurice in Regents Park that the price of true love was that he return to the front for himself so that he could find his true self again, so Nicholas must return to the ordinary world and find his real self before a meaningful relationship with

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[42]Ibid., p. 141.

another will be possible.

Thirdly the history of de Deukan's life has shown Nick that it is impossible to completely cut oneself off from the contingent world and sustain romance and dream as the only reality. Since it is impossible to separate the water from the wave because the two are inseparable and to remove one from the other destroys both, it is also impossible to live meaningfully without any reality.

Next the mad hermit, Henrik Nygaard, by having the certainty of an experience beyond the scope of science and reason has proven that human existence, as in existential philosophy, is not exhaustively describable or understandable in scientific terms. Therefore breaking through the thin net of science can make reality full of mysterious new vigor, new forms, new possibilities.

Finally during their last weekend together Conchis told Nick the most important lesson of his life which he learned during the German occupation of Phraxos. He has stressed its central importance to the novel already by having forced Nick to go through a dramatic re-enactment of this episode. When Maurice was ordered to beat three resistance fighters to death with an empty machine gun while they continued to scream the Greek word for freedom through their mutilated mouths, he suddenly understood that the freedom to establish one's identity through free choice is the most important aspect of human life.

> I saw that I was the only person left in that square who had the freedom left to choose, and that the annunciation and defense of that freedom was more important than common sense, self-preservation, yes, than my own life, than the lives of the eighty hostages. Again and again, since then, those eighty men have risen in the night and accused me. You must remember that I was certain I was going to die too. But all I have to set against their crucified faces are those few transcendent seconds of knowledge. But knowledge like a white heat. My reason has repeatedly told me I was wrong. Yet my total being still tells me I was right.[43]

Thus, with these principles already established in his mind Nick regains consciousness in the bow of a boat. As was previously mentioned, the protagonist is now going to be forced to see his real self at a mock trial. Significantly the first thing he notices when he opens his eyes is an extraordinary mural of a huge black figure, a kind of living skeleton, with a gaunt hand pointed down at a mirror. It has been newly painted and obviously put there to make Nick begin contemplating himself.

> I stared at myself. They were trying to drive me mad, to brainwash me in some astounding way. But I clung to reality. I clung too, to something in Alison, something like a tiny limpid crystal of eternal nonbetrayal. Like a light in the darkest night. Like a teardrop. An eternal inability to be so cruel.[44]

The long trial scene which follows is another of the excessively florid and self-indulgently overwritten sections

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[43] Ibid., p. 395.

[44] Ibid., p. 441.

which detract from this novel. As Nick has observed, it certainly belongs to a world without limits. A human deck of tarot cards changes before Nick's eyes into a world renowned panel of psychologists. Julie, who now assumes the role of the brilliant young Dr. Vanessa Maxwell, leads them in condemning the protagonist for his promiscuity, his infidelity, his selfishness, his emotional manipulation of young women, and his need to cast himself in real, ordinary life as the rebel and outsider.

When the trial finishes Nick is released and is told that his turn to judge them has finally arrived. Julie is selected as their scapegoat. She is tied on a flogging-frame in front of the protagonist and he is handed a whip.

> I looked back at Lily. There was a devil in me, an evil marquis, that wanted to strike, to see that wet, red weals traverse the delicate skin ... I knew I had absolute freedom of choice. I could do it 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 submachine gun.
>
> And my freedom too was in not striking, whatever the cost. Whatever they thought of me; even though it would seem, as they had foreseen, that I was forgiving them, that I was indoctrinated; their dupe. That eighty other parts of me must die.
>
> 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 guerrilla, 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.
>
> I lowered the Cat.[45]

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[45] Ibid., pp. 465-466.

Thus Nick has finally gained dignity and an identity which is truly his own by proving his ability to choose freely. He is no longer trapped in the role of a French novel's anti-hero. His denial of the need for sub-human violence has finally affirmed both his and his victim's essential humanity.

However, before he is finally set free he is forced to go through one last ordeal; a disintoxication to completely remove any remaining attachment which he might still have to the romance and mystery of Conchis's domain. First he is shown a pornographic film starring Julie and Joe. Then they appear naked before him with Julie assuming her final role as Goya's Maja Desnuda.

> There was no perversion, no attempt to suggest that I was watching anything else but two people who were in love making love; as one might watch two boxers in a gymnasium or two acrobats on a stage. Not that there was anything acrobatic or violent about them. He was tender with her, she was tender with him, and they behaved as if to show that the reality was the very antithesis of the absurd nastiness in the film.[46]

Therefore Nick sees that it is sex without love which is perverted and that real love is the most natural of acts. The disintoxication has proven beyond a doubt that Julie has been deceiving him from the first, and just as Nick has been punished for his treatment of Alison, this final mutual humiliation has also punished Julie for her treatment of

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[46]Ibid., p. 477.

the protagonist. Nick is then given an injection and when he regains consciousness he is free.

That night as he thinks over his experience he finally sees himself for what he really is:

> What was I? Exactly what Conchis had had me told: nothing but the net sum of countless wrong turnings. Why? I dismissed most of the Freudian jargon of the trial; but all my life I had tried to turn life into fiction, to hold reality away; always I had acted as if a third person was watching and listening and giving me marks for good or bad 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. This leechlike variation of the superego, I had created myself, fostered myself, and because of it I had always been incapable of acting freely. It was not my defense; but my despot. And now I saw it, I saw it a death too late.[47]

He now knows that he lost his one chance to make his real and ordinary life meaningful when he failed to choose Alison's real love over the romance of his dream girl, Julie. Consequently, when Nick discovers at the end of this section that Alison has not really committed suicide, he is filled with new hope and an irrepressible desire to sing.

The quotation from Les Infortunes de la Vertu which emphasizes the central concern of the third and final section of The Magus is,

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[47] Ibid., p. 487.

> La triomphe de la philosophie serait de jeter du jour sur l'obscurité des voies dont la providence se sert pour parvenir aux fins qu'elle se propose sur l'homme, et de tracer d'après cela quelque plan de conduite qui pût faire connaitre à ce malheureux individu bipède perpétuellement ballotté par les caprices de cet être qui dit-on le dirige aussi despotiquement la manière dont il faut qu'l interprète les décrets de cette providence sur lui.[48]
>
> (Philosophy's ultimate victory would consist in shedding light on the many abstruse ways taken by Providence to attain the end which it has in view for man, and consequently to draw up some plan of behaviour which could make known to this miserable two-legged creature, eternally tossed about by the whims of such a being who, as the story goes, guides him in such a despotic manner, the way in which he must interpret the orders given him by Providence.)

This epigraph is also appropriate for as the final section begins the protagonist, having achieved a spiritual re-awakening, emerges from his mythic world and returns home to try to philosophically reconcile his newly found romance perceptions with his old self. In so doing he now develops the fourth basic structural element of all Fowles's romance fiction.

When Nicholas arrives in London nothing happens right away. The days drag on and he begins to fill them by pursuing the trail of Conchis and Lily in England. As the events of Bourani recede into the past, the anger and rage which he felt during the trial slowly turn into a sort of forgiveness.

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[48] Ibid., p. 515.

> I looked back to the events of Bourani, which could not have happened, but which had happened, and found myself, at the end of some tired London afternoon, as unable to wish that they had not happened as I was to forgive Conchis for having given me the part he did. Slowly I came to realize that my dilemma was in fact a sort of de facto forgiveness, a condonation of what had been done to me; even though, still too sore to accept that something active had taken place, I thought of "done" in a passive sense.[49]

Finally one of the protagonist's clues pays off and he meets Lily de Seitas, the mother of June and Julie, who did actually once live in the St. John's Wood as Conchis's story of the First World War had said. He immediately demands to know where Alison is, but Mrs. de Seitas assures him that ~~he will~~ find out nothing concerning her whereabouts until Alison herself decides he should. Instead she offers Nicholas her friendship, which he flatly refuses.

> ... I was not allowed to meet Alison. Something was expected of me, some Orphean performance that would gain me access to the underworld where she was hidden ... or hiding herself. I was on probation. But no one gave me any real indication of what I was meant to be proving. I had apparently found the entrance to Tartarus. But that brought me no nearer Eurydice.[50]

But, as the weeks continue to go by with no new developments Nick eventually softens and telephones Mrs. de Seitas to know if he can meet with her again.

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[49] Ibid., p. 525.

[50] Ibid., p. 555.

The next morning an American named John Briggs comes to visit the protagonist. Having spent the winter at London University, Briggs is now on his way to Greece to teach English at the Lord Byron School and he wants to ask Nick what to expect. A Mr. Conchis had accepted him for the position and that very morning had given him Nick's address in a cable from Greece. Nick guesses that Mrs. de Seitas has sent Briggs to see if he has undergone a change of heart about what happened on Phraxos and to determine if he is willing to keep his mouth shut about it. Now, like Leverrier and Mitford before him, Nick also decides to let Briggs find out about Bourani for himself.

> I felt a little of what Mitford must have felt with me: a malicious amusement bedeviled in my case by a European delight in seeing brash America being taken for a ride; and beyond that a kinder wish, which I would never have admitted to Conchis or Lily de Seitas, not to spoil his experience.
>
> ...And once again I was standing with the cat in my hand, unable to bring it down.[51]

When Nick meets Mrs. de Seitas for the second time she tells him that she doesn't think he will have to wait very much longer to see Alison, and her final remark to him as she leaves in a taxi is a warning that he is not to cause pain to other people. So Nicholas continues to wait.

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[51] Ibid., p. 568.

> I wanted to show them - if they had eyes present to be shown, and I could never be sure that they hadn't - that I could live without affairs; and less consciously I wanted to show myself the same thing. I also wanted to be able to face Alison with the knowledge that I had been faithful to her, though I partly wanted this knowledge as a weapon, an added lash to the cat - if the cat had to be used.
>
> The truth was that the recurrent new feeling I had for Alison had nothing to do with sex. Perhaps it had something to do with my alienation from England and the English, my speciesslessness, my sense of exile; but it seemed to me that I could have slept with a different girl every night, and still have gone on wanting to see Alison just as much. I wanted something else from her now - and what it was only she could give me. That was the distinction. Anyone could give me sex. But only she could give me this other situation.[52]

Consequently, one begins to see how much Nick is changing. In Part One he had been accurately described as the affaire de peau type. Now as the novel nears its end Nick shows that he wants a real affaire de coeur. Back in his own ordinary society he is becoming a new man with the help of his romance perceptions. At this point in the novel he meets Jojo.

Nick goes to the cinema one evening to kill time and, by chance, he sits next to a fat, young Scottish girl with thick eyebrows and dirty fingernails. Occasionally she turns towards him to get a light for her cigarette and they eventually start a conversation. Nick finds that Jojo has

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[52]Ibid., p. 581.

run away from home, spent all her money and is living alone in a London rooming-house. Since the protagonist feels great affection for her and not the least sexual desire, he offers her a job as his companion and they begin to spend all their time together. Unfortunately, though, Jojo hopes to find more than just companionship with Nicholas and before long she has engineered a situation in which they must both spend the night in the same room. When Nick refuses to have sex with her she begins to cry and tells him that she loves him. Suddenly the protagonist realizes that he has caused pain to another human being once again.

> There were minutes of silence then and in it I thought about pain, about hurting people. It was the only truth that mattered, it was the only morality that mattered, the only sin, the only crime. Once again I had committed the one unforgivable: I had hurt an innocent person... ... I had had it whispered in my ear only a few weeks before; I had had it demonstrated to me in a way at my "trial"; for that matter I had even paid lipservice to it long before I went to Greece. But now I felt it; and by "feel" I mean that I knew I had to choose it, every day, even though I went on failing to keep it, had every day to choose it, every day to try to live by it. And I knew that it was all bound up with Alison; with choosing Alison, and having to go on choosing her every day. When Lily de Seitas had whispered it in my ear I had taken it as a retrospective thing, a comment on my past; and on my anecdote. But it had been a signpost to my future. Adulthood was like a mountain, and I stood at the foot of this cliff of ice, this impossible and unclimbable: Thou shalt not commit pain.[53]

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[53] Ibid., pp. 589-590.

So Nick learns that apart from establishing his identity through free choice he must also learn to accept full, matured responsibility for all his own actions. Sometimes he will hurt others despite his efforts to avoid it, but each day he must try again to live without committing pain. At this point Fowles's fourth structural element is complete because the protagonist has now fully reconciled his old self to his new romance perceptions. The central truths of Conchis's romantic domain have been incorporated into Nicholas's ordinary day-to-day life. He is no longer alienated from his society and consequently he is ready for his final confrontation with Alison.

Conchis arranges Nick and Alison's final meeting through Nick's landlady, Kemp, who takes Nick on a walk amidst the ordinary London reality of Regents Park and then abandons him at the spot where Alison is to meet him.

> She was looking down, then up, straight at me. I jerked round, searching for Kemp. But I knew where Kemp was; she was walking home.
>
> All the time I had expected some spectacular reentry, some mysterious call, a metaphorical, perhaps even literal, descent into a modern Tartarus. Not this. And yet, as I stared at her, unable to speak, at her steady bright look, the smallest smile, I understood that this was the only possible way of return; her rising into this most banal of scenes, this most banal London, this reality as plain and dull as wheat. Since she was cast as reality, she had come in her own; and so she came, yet in some way heightened, stranger, still with the aura of another world.[54]

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[54] Ibid., pp. 595-596.

The date is All Hallows Eve. Yet, significantly, even on this day neither of them is able to wear a mask in front of the other. Nick is totally frank and honest with Alison for the first time in his life. He openly admits that he cannot be sure that he will be different in the future but he is now willing to try and establish a relationship with her which is truly based on mutual love and honesty and which has the potential to give meaning to their ordinary lives.

> I'm nearly broke. I haven't got a job, and I'm never going to have a job that means anything. So remember that you're standing with the worst prospect in London. Now second. If Lily walked down that path behind us and beckoned to me, I would follow. I think I would follow. The fact that I don't know is what I want you to remember. And while you're about it, remember that she isn't one girl, but a type of encounter. And the world's full of that sort of encounter.
>
> ... You've always been able to see this ... whatever it is ... between us. Joining us. I haven't. That's all I can offer you. The possibility that I'm beginning to see it. That's all.[55]

Alison has already said that she did not want to have this encounter with Nick but she had been pressured into it by Conchis. Also, she was probably going to go back to Australia no matter what he said, and although he seemed very nice now she believed that in a few weeks he would probably begin to hurt and abuse her again. When she tries

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[55]Ibid., p. 602.

to reply to Nick's offer of a new relationship, he cuts her off and tells her not to speak, but simply to make a choice.

> "Can I speak?"
>
> "No. You now have a choice. You do as I say, or you don't. This. In a few seconds I am going to walk away from you. You will look after me then call my name. I shall stop, turn round. You will come up to me. I shall turn and start walking away again. You will come after me again, and catch my arm. I shall shake myself free. Then. Then I shall slap you as hard as I can over the side of the face. And believe me, it won't hurt me half as much as it hurts you. I shall walk towards the gate over there on our right. You will stand for a few minutes, covering your face with your hands. Then you will begin walking in the opposite direction to me, over to the north gate. To our left. It's half a mile away." I paused. She swallowed, I knew she was frightened. "When you get there you will take a taxi. You will communicate with no one. You will take a taxi." I hesitated, losing impetus, then found the right echo; and the right exit. "You will take a taxi and go straight to Paddington Station. The waiting room."[56]

Nick is aware that he must do some Orphean feat if he is to win back Alison. Now he domonstrates that he is actually worthy of her by proving that he has become an authentic person in existential terms - he places Alison in the same situation in which Conchis had put him. Therefore, he now makes her aware of the need to establish her own identity through free choice. Nick has simply initiated a new masque similar to Conchis's except that it is about to be played on the stage of the real world. First he symbolically slaps her into his "life-play" as one is

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[56]Ibid., pp. 602-603.

slapped into life at birth and then he sends her to another waiting room, this time at Paddington Station. The fifth basic structural element in all Fowles's romance plots is that each book ends with a new beginning and this is exactly what has happened here. He has passed the vicious cat to her and now she must decide whether she will affirm her own full humanity by denying the need to use it.

> "So get it clear. You have five seconds. In those five seconds you are going to choose, and choose for ever, whose side you are on.
>
> * * *
>
> I stopped; turned with a granite-hard face. She came towards me, stopped two or three yards away. She wasn't acting; she was going back to Australia; or to some Australia of the mind, the emotions, to live, without me. Yet she could not let me go.
> Eleutheria. Her turn to know.[57]

Thus, Fowles's first modern romance ends without certifying which decision Alison finally makes. Yet our last glimpse of Nick is still clearly affirmative. He has overcome his rigid and incomplete image of himself as an existential anti-hero and learned to establish his own identity by free choice which is based only on honest experience and response. Moreover, he has accepted the responsibility for his own actions. As the book ends he makes a further positive contribution to his society by causing another individual to realize the need to learn to

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[57] Ibid., p. 603.

freely choose and control her own life. At the very least, Nicholas Urfe has achieved a spiritual, self-contained triumph in existential terms; which is the last of the six basic structural elements shared by all Fowles's fictions. Also, it is possible that when he reaches Paddington Station he will have gained a love relationship capable of giving real meaning to his life in the ordinary world. Unlike other modern, existential heroes, Nicholas Urfe has not ended his spiritual quest with nausea, disgust or gratuitous acts of rebellion. Instead, either alone or with Alison, he has reason to look optimistically towards his future. For, he has reached the point of fulcrum which Conchis mentioned early in Part Two. He knows exactly who he is and how he should behave to give meaning to his life in the ordinary world.

CHAPTER TWO

THE COLLECTOR

After seven years of work on The Magus John Fowles finally finished the first draft in 1960. Yet, despite this vast expenditure of time and effort, the young author realized that his manuscript was still completely unsuitable for publication not only because he had failed to "match the concept in the writing" but also because there was "a clear supernatural element all through the first draft"[1] which did not work and needed to be eliminated. Consequently Fowles decided to put The Magus aside for a time and stubbornly began trying to write something else. Soon afterwards in a one month tour de force of almost 10,000 words a day[2] Fowles wrote the first draft of The Collector. The necessary amendments and revisions to this new work were also quickly completed and in 1963 The Collector became the author's first published novel. It soon proved

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[1]John Fowles, letter to the present writer, 24 April 1976.

[2]John Fowles, "Notes On An Unfinished Novel." Afterwords: Novelists On Their Novels, ed. by Thomas McCormack, Harper & Row: N.Y., N.Y., 1969, p. 163.

to be a highly successful bestseller on both sides of the Atlantic and Fowles's career as a novelist was off to an impressive start.

Since the thematic similarities between The Collector and The Magus are extremely numerous one cannot, in retrospect, fully avoid approaching Fowles's second novel as a variation on the theme of his earlier work. In this book the author again concentrates on the inner lives and motivations of his central characters and through their romantic ordeals he once more tries to establish a realization of each individual's need to learn to freely choose and control his own life. Furthermore Shakespeare's The Tempest again embodies the moral dimensions of this new novel. But, instead of finding a Caliban-figure caught between his lust for two women, this variation of Fowles's fundamental plot now places an innocent, desirable Miranda between two diametrically opposed men. Unfortunately, however, the Prospero who has given this Miranda the necessary knowledge and understanding to come to terms both with herself and with those around her remains in the world of contemporary social reality and cannot accompany her as she descends into the realm of Caliban's demented and self-fabricated world of fantasy and dream. Also, although Frederick Clegg, the protagonist of The Collector, is far less sophisticated and articulate than Nicholas Urfe, both

these men share the same significant fault. In The Magus Nicholas had treated women like objects and, therefore, collected them "as an unscrupulous collector falls in love with a painting he wants. And will do anything to get".[3] Clegg, of course, collects women in a much more literal manner after he wins a fortune on the football pools, and because he is pathological and not just selfish, Fowles's second novel is much more centrally concerned with the darker possibilities inherent in human choice.

Despite these many striking similarities between the two novels The Collector nevertheless does represent a significant development over The Magus in the author's technical ability to control his work. Where The Magus had been lush, overwritten and troubled by a sense of romanticism run riot this new book is spare, economical and tightly disciplined within its romantic framework. Fowles's creation of a fantasy world in the basement of a remote Sussex cottage now allows him to avoid his earlier problem of having to draw the reader slowly away from contemporary social reality and then gradually lure him into a timeless, mythic domain. Furthermore, the many references to specific places in England as well as the mention of such things as the C.N.D. Aldermaston marches make this book much more

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[3] The Magus, p. 550.

credible at the realistic level. More importantly, however, it is Fowles's improved use of his two main thematic devices which demonstrates his artistic growth in this second novel and consequently this chapter will be chiefly concerned with examining these devices in more detail.

Using the first of these devices which is the specifically physical layout of each novel through which the author innovatively presents his theme to the reader, Fowles adds psychological depth to his modern romance of a persecuted maiden by structuring his material to juxtapose two different first person narratives which focus on the same events. Together they vividly show the reader the gradual breakdown in communications between Miranda and her captor. Moreover, these two radically different versions of the same story allow the reader to see into two characters' minds for the first and only time in all Fowles's fiction, and as they both tell their own side of the story they each in turn go through most of the six basic structural elements of Fowles's fundamental romance plot. Although this presentation of material is obviously not fully original since it has been used by several other modern authors including William Faulkner in The Sound And The Fury, it does clearly indicate the author's gradual progression away from a traditional presentation of fiction towards more innovative forms of literature. Similarly, Fowles's second

thematic device of creating one image to develop the central motif in each novel is also remarkably improved in The Collector. For, as the book's dominant image of a caterpillar emerging from its cocoon as a mature, beautiful butterfly only to die inside a collector's killing-bottle is developed, it begins to reflect powerfully the motif of the growth in Miranda's spiritual awareness right up until she does of pneumonia in her basement "cell". Consequently, it is appropriate that Clegg's first person narrative begins with an elaborate comparison of his secret dream-girl, Miranda Grey, to a beautiful and rare butterfly which he has always wanted to catch.

> When she was home from her boarding-school I used to see her almost every day sometimes, because their house was right opposite the Town Hall Annexe... I stood right behind her once in a queue at the public library down Crossfield Street. She didn't look once at me, but I watched the back of her head and her hair in a long pigtail. It was very pale, silky, like burnet cocoons...
>
> Another time one Saturday off when I went up to the Natural History Museum I came back on the same train. She sat three seats down and sideways to me and read a book, so I could watch her for thirty-five minutes. 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.[4]

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[4]John Fowles, The Collector, Pan Books Ltd. (London, Eng., 1965), pp. 5-6. All further references to this novel will be taken from this edition.

Frederick Clegg's inadequacy with language and his resulting inability to articulate his thoughts clearly are immediately obvious to the reader, and as his monologue of confession turns from a discussion of Miranda to a summation of his own past life one begins to realize that his verbal handicap is merely an outward manifestation of his more complete social alienation. Clegg's father had been killed in a car accident because he was drunk and then his mother had deserted him as a young child. Afterwards he was brought up by his Aunt Annie, Uncle Dick and their crippled daughter, Mabel. Although Aunt Annie refused to tell him exactly what had happened to his real mother she frequently pointed out that his mother had "only wanted an easy time" and that it was good to be rid of her since "she was a woman of the streets". In childhood Clegg's only interest had been collecting butterflies, a hobby which Aunt Annie and Mabel both despised. It even took a large domestic quarrel after he returned from the army before he was allowed to smoke cigarettes at home. Having first been orphaned and then growing up the product of such a mean and stifling environment Clegg continued to be a social outsider when he got a job as a clerk at the Town Hall Annexe. The other men never missed an opportunity to make fun of his collections of insects and most of the women there thoroughly disgusted him.

> I know I don't have what it is girls look for; I know chaps like Crutchley who just seem plain coarse to me get on well with them. Some of the girls in the Annexe, it was really disgusting, the looks they'd give him. It's some crude animal thing I was born without. (And I'm glad I was, if more people were like me, in my opinion, the world would be better.)[5]

So Fred showed his dislike for the others in the office by refusing to help purchase group tickets on the motor-pools. Thus, when his own single ticket won the prize, he had enough money to be able to stop working and go to London with his aunt and cousin.

While he was in London with nothing to do he began to think of sex and one evening he decided to use a telephone number Crutchley had given him to buy a prostitute. But, due to his repressed past, the experience was completely unsatisfactory for him.

> Well, I took a taxi round to the second one's address. I won't say what happened, except that I was no good. I was too nervous, I tried to be as if I knew all about it and of course she saw, she was old and she was horrible, horrible. I mean both the filthy way she behaved and in looks. She was worn, common. Like a specimen you'd turn away from, out collecting. I thought of Miranda seeing me there like that. As I said, I tried to do it but it was no good and I didn't try hardly.
>
> I'm not the crude pushing sort, I never have been, I always had higher aspirations, as they say.[6]

Since Miranda is young, pretty and, most importantly, innocent she increasingly becomes the object of Clegg's

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[5]Ibid., p. 10.

[6]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

desires. When Aunt Annie and Mabel leave to visit relatives in Australia on his money, Clegg reveals the full extent to which he is morally and spiritually estranged from normal humanity by beginning his preparations to capture her. Throughout the rest of the book Fowles continues to emphasize his protagonist's complete social derangement by repeated analogical references to Caliban.

The first of the six structural elements found in Fowles's fundamental romance plot is that all the author's work begins with a precisely fixed location of time and place which gives the reader the illusion of starting a realistic novel. With his Aunt and Mabel safely on the boat to Australia Clegg is now free to start searching London for his dream-girl and Fowles carefully puts as much factual information into this part of the narrative as possible in order to make it fully credible to the reader. Although Clegg repeatedly asserts that nothing was planned and that all subsequent events grew out of his dreams, it is clear that on a sub-conscious level everything was thought out in minute detail. Clegg has already purchased and learned to drive a van especially equipped with a bed when his search begins on May 10th. After checking into the Cremorne Hotel in Paddington he finds the address of The Slade School of Art in the telephone directory and waits outside. On the second day he sees Miranda and then follows her and a friend

into a coffee-bar. Later he moves daily from hotel to hotel to avoid any possibility of being traced and after seeing her getting off the Underground at Warren Street he eventually follows her to Hampstead and learns that she lives at 29 Hamnett Road.

The author's second structural element is that after showing himself to be alienated from his homeland the protagonist invariably begins a solitary journey into a timeless dimension of myth or legend far removed from the realm of ordinary social reality. Clegg's social alienation has already been discussed. Now his solitary journey begins on a Sunday when an advertisement for a secluded Sussex cottage catches his eye. Although the house immediately appears well suited to his purposes it is only after the discovery of a secret room in the basement that he decides to buy it.

> It was another large cellar, four big steps down from the first one, but this time with a lower roof and a bit arched, like the rooms you see underneath churches sometimes. The steps came down diagonally in one corner so the room ran away, so to speak.
>
> Just the thing for orgies, he said.
>
> What was it for? I asked, ignoring his silly facetiousness.
>
> He said they thought it might be because the cottage was so on its own. They'd have to store a lot of food. Or it might have been a secret Roman Catholic chapel. One of the electricians later said it was a smugglers' place when they used to be going to London from Newhaven.
>
> Well, we went back upstairs and out. When he locked the door and put the key back under a flowerpot, it was like down there didn't exist.

> It was two worlds. It's always been like that. Some days I've woken up and it's all been like a dream, till I went down again.[7]

After a month of final preparations to make Miranda's escape from this potentially secret world impossible, the protagonist returns to London. Now, throughout the scene where Miranda is captured, the author continues to develop his butterfly motif.

> I was going to use chloroform. I used it once in the killing bottle.[8]

* * *

> It finally ten days later happened as it sometimes does with butterflies. I mean you go to a place where you know you may see something rare and you don't, but the next time not looking for it you see it on a flower right in front of you, handed to you on a plate, as they say.[9]

* * *

> To sum up, that night was the best thing I ever did in my life (bar winning the pools in the first place). It was like catching the Mazarine Blue again or a Queen of Spain Fritillary. I mean it was like something you only do once in a life-time and even then often not; something you dream about more than you ever expect to see come true, in fact.[10]

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[7] Ibid., p. 19.

[8] Ibid., p. 24.

[9] Ibid., p. 25.

[10] Ibid., pp. 30-31.

Thus, having finally caught and locked Miranda safely in the basement's abandoned chapel, Clegg has shut out the contemporary world and has started turning his demented dream into reality. He has pinned Miranda, like a butterfly, in his private place of worship and now may go and gloat over her captive beauty whenever he wishes. Yet, no living person can ever be treated completely like an inanimate object and, from the first, life inside Clegg's domain falls short of his earlier expectations.

> I didn't know what to say, I was so excited, her there at last in the flesh. So nervous. I wanted to look at her face, at her lovely hair, all of her all small and pretty, but I couldn't, she stared so at me.[11]

At first Miranda assumes that Clegg has captured her either for ransom or for sex. But, after questioning him more deeply, she is surprised to learn that Clegg wants her simply because he is secretly in love with her and apart from giving her back her freedom, he respects her enough to do whatever she wishes.

> No one will understand, they will think I was just after her for the obvious. Sometimes when I looked at [pornographic] books before she came, it was what I thought, or I didn't know. Only when she came it was all different, I didn't think about the books or about posing, things like that disgusted me, it was because I knew they would disgust her too. There was something so nice about her you had to be nice too, you could see she sort of expected it. I

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[11]Ibid., p. 32.

> mean having her real made other things seem nasty. She was not like some woman you don't respect so you don't care what you do, you respected her and you had to be careful.[12]

After vainly attempting both to escape and also to convince Clegg that he should let her go, Miranda makes a deal with him that she will remain as his guest for twenty-eight days so long as he lets her have exercise, a proper diet, regular baths, some fresh air, drawing materials, a record player and things from the chemist. Naturally she realizes that he may not let her go at the end of four weeks but their agreement at least gives her some hope and in the mean time she can still try to work out an escape plan.

When Miranda asks Clegg what his first name is he lies to her and insists that it is Ferdinand; a name which he likes because as a child Uncle Dick used to call him Lord Ferdinand Clegg, Marquis of Bugs. Although Miranda refers to him as Ferdinand from time to time throughout the novel she also recognizes the obvious allusion to The Tempest and more often calls him Caliban. Indeed, this is entirely appropriate in the context of the novel, for, particularly during the first four weeks of her captivity, Frederick Clegg is presented both as a potential monster and a potential lover. Consequently, much of the first section's

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[12] Ibid., pp. 38-39.

intensity arises from the ambiguous response to Clegg of both Miranda and the reader. Since one is aware of Clegg's spiritual and financial deprivation as a child it becomes easy to see him as a virtual innocent who, in many ways, is as much a prisoner as the girl he has trapped. Also, his diligence, ingenuity, patience, sensitivity, gentleness and desire to learn make him very similar to Shakespeare's Caliban in that although he can be horrible at times he is also capable of arousing a strong feeling of sympathy. His behavior is reprehensible, yet to a large extent it is understandable. Moreover, in this first section one sees Miranda through Clegg's eyes and because there are many shortcomings in her behavior as well, it becomes disconcertingly easy for the reader to side with Clegg against her. For she is often spoiled, arrogant and a prig.

> I'm an entomologist. I collect butterflies.
> "Of course," she said. "I remember they said so in the paper. Now you've collected me."
> She seemed to think it was funny, so I said, in a manner of speaking.
> "No, not in a manner of speaking. Literally. You've pinned me in this little room and you can come and gloat over me."
> I don't think of it like that at all.
> "Do you know I'm a Buddhist? I hate anything that takes life. Even insects' lives."
> You ate the chicken, I said. I caught her that time.
> "But I despise myself. If I was a better person I'd be a vegetarian."[13]

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[13] Ibid., p. 45.

> Then, here, she said and held out the drawing. It was really good, it really amazed me, the likeness. It seemed to make me more dignified, better-looking than I really was.
>
> Would you consider selling this, I asked?
>
> "I hadn't, but I will. Two hundred guineas?" All right, I said.
>
> She gave me another sharp look.
>
> "You'd give me two hundred guineas for that?"
>
> Yes, I said. Because you did it.
>
> "Give it to me." I handed it back and before I knew what, she was tearing it across.
>
> Please don't, I said. She stopped, but it was torn half across.
>
> "But it's bad, bad, bad." Then suddenly she sort of threw it at me. "Here you are. Put it in a drawer with the butterflies."[14]

Even Miranda herself cannot avoid responding to the more positive aspects of Clegg's personality and, as was the case in The Magus, the central characters' mutual ordeal contains considerable romantic potential in the beginning.

> Suddenly she said, "It's funny, I should be shivering with fear. But I feel safe with you."
>
> I'll never hurt you. Unless you force me to.
>
> It was suddenly as I always hoped, we were getting to know each other, she was beginning to see me for what I really was.[15]

* * *

> It was like we were the only two people in the world. No one will ever understand how happy we were - just me, really, but there were times when I consider she didn't mind in spite of what she said, if she thought about it.[16]

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[14] Ibid., p. 64.

[15] Ibid., p. 56.

[16] Ibid., p. 68.

Therefore, as the twenty-eighth day draws near Miranda shows her genuine concern for Clegg, and not simply for herself, by trying to initiate in him the third basic structural element of Fowles's fundamental romance plot which is that during the ordeal the protagonist is forced to reflect upon his own personality and in so doing undergo a spiritual reawakening.

> "You can change, you're young, you've got money. You can learn. And what have you done? You've had a little dream, the sort of dream I suppose little boys have and masturbate about and you fall over yourself being nice to me so that you won't have to admit to yourself that the whole business of my being here is nasty, nasty, nasty --" ...
>
> "You have money - as a matter of fact, you aren't stupid, you could become whatever you liked. Only you've got to shake off the past. You've got to kill your aunt and the house you lived in and the people you lived with. You've got to be a new human being."[17]

Unfortunately, though, Clegg is too spiritually diseased to accept Miranda's offers of help. Instead, when he releases her to go upstairs for what Miranda hopes is to be their last meal together, he realizes that he cannot let her go even though he vaguely understands that her beauty needs freedom and normal life to be complete. Again Fowles uses his butterfly motif to convey this new development to the reader.

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[17] Ibid., p. 82.

> She made me wait about ten minutes and then she came out. You could have knocked me down with a feather ... She looked just like one of those model girls you see in magazines; it really amazed me what she could look like when she wanted. I remember her eyes were different too, she'd draw black lines round them so she looked sophisticated. Sophisticated, that's exactly the word. Of course, she made me feel all clumsy and awkward. I had the same feeling I did when I had watched an imago emerge [from its cocoon], and then have to kill it. I mean, the beauty confuses you, you don't know what you want to do any more, what you should do.
>
> ... And I knew more and more I couldn't let her go.[18]

Once Miranda understands that Clegg is not going to let her go the romance of their situation quickly starts to fade from the novel and her desperation to survive rapidly increases. When she suddenly hears a car outside she kicks a burning log from the fireplace and rushes towards the door. However, Clegg manages to subdue her with more chloroform. Then, after putting out the fire, he carries her unconscious body to the cellar without being discovered. As he puts her on the bed he realizes that he is able to stare at her for the first time without having to contend with her mind. She has finally been reduced to the beautiful object he had originally wished to possess. As he undresses her his suppressed sexuality starts to emerge and he rushes out to get his camera. Pathetically he fulfills his perverse desires by impotently raping her through his camera's lens.

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[18] Ibid., p. 87.

After this their relationship is permanently changed. Miranda tries to catch him off guard and murder him with an axe which he carelessly left by the back door. Yet this attempt to escape also fails. Finally, having exhausted all other possibilities, she decides to try and seduce him after her weekly bath in the hope that loving him physically might cause him to let her go. But the shock for Clegg of finding himself naked with his dream-girl is too much, and he is a total failure sexually. Instead, her attempted seduction only causes Clegg to lose all the respect for her innocence which he had naively projected on to her youthful personality.

> ... She didn't see how to love me in the right way. There were a lot of ways she could have pleased me.
>
> She was like all women, she had a one-track mind.
>
> I never respected her again. It left me angry for days.
>
> Because I could do it.
>
> The photographs (the day I gave her the dad), I used to look at them sometimes. I could take my time with them. They didn't talk back to me.[19]

* * *

> It was no good, she had killed all the romance, she had made herself like any other woman, I didn't respect her any more, there was nothing left to respect.[20]

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[19] Ibid., p. 113.

[20] Ibid., p. 114.

Later, when Clegg goes down to visit Miranda in her prison he finds that she has a severe cold. Nevertheless they have an argument during which Clegg again loses his self-control and forces her to strip naked in the cold room for more photographs. He now possesses her solely by degradation. He has finally deprived her of all her humanity and has reduced her to the status of an inanimate object.

> I got the pictures developed and printed that night. The best ones were with her face cut off.[21]

Finally, as the section ends, Clegg realizes that Miranda has really become critically ill. She can barely draw her breath and she desperately begs him to fetch a doctor. In the last paragraph of the confession Clegg indicates that perhaps he has begun to achieve the new spiritual awakening which Miranda had tried earlier to initiate in him.

> What I am trying to say is that it all came unexpected. I know what I did next day was a mistake, but up to that day I thought I was acting for the best and within my rights.[22]

The second section of The Collector is written in diary form with dialogue and through this journal Miranda is given an opportunity to tell her side of the story. One already knows that she is the daughter of a well-to-do,

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[21] Ibid., p. 122.

[22] Ibid., p. 125.

suburban doctor and her style of writing, in sharp contrast to Clegg's, quickly indicates that she has had most of the social advantages which her captor has had to go without. For, due to her inherited aptitude and good educational opportunity she is both intelligent and articulate and these qualities allow Fowles to use her section to add psychological depth to his novel.

Although Miranda has already shown herself to be somewhat spoiled and arrogant it must be remembered that she is still very young. Until the day of her capture her life had always been safe and protected either at home, at her private school or with her Aunt Caroline in London. At the Slade School of Art she had just begun to open herself to art, freedom, passion and self-expression. She had been an embryonic artist in the process of emerging from her cocoon and then she was kidnapped by Clegg and forced into an isolated, timeless situation in his cellar. Metaphorically she now finds herself in the killing-bottle and significantly she immediately refers to her basement prison not as a chapel, but as a crypt. Yet, despite her lack of experience, Miranda does not give up hope. With sensitivity and intuitive knowledge she rationally uses her journal to accurately assess her situation.

> I know what I am to him. A butterfly he has always wanted to catch. I remember (the first time I met him) G.P. saying that collectors were the worst animals of all.
>
> He meant art collectors, of course. I didn't really understand, I thought he was just trying to shock Caroline -- and me. But of course, he is right. They're anti-life, anti-art, anti-everything.
>
> I write in this terrible nightlike silence as if I feel normal. But I'm not. I'm so sick, so frightened so alone. The solitude is unbearable. Every time the door opens I want to rush at it and out. But I know now I must save up my escape attempts. Outwit him. Plan ahead.
>
> Survive.[23]

However, even in captivity, Miranda retains a genuine desire to improve both Caliban and herself. As she retells her version of the story she mentions many of the incidents where she had previously appeared arrogant and spoiled through Caliban's eyes. Now it becomes clear that she too had recognized these faults in her own character. Since she is suddenly being forced to contemplate herself in isolation, she continues to become a better, more mature person because, unlike Caliban, she can look at herself subjectively and learn from past mistakes.

> I "hung" them and asked him to choose which one was best. Of course he picked all those that looked most like the wretched bowl of fruit. I started to try to explain to him. I was boasting about one of the sketches (the one I liked best). He annoyed me, it didn't mean anything to him, and he made it clear in his miserable I'll-take-your-word-for-it way that he didn't really care. To him I was just a child amusing herself.

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[23] Ibid., p. 132.

> Blind, blind, other world.
> My fault. I was showing off. How could he see the magic and importance of art (not my art, of art) when I was so vain?[24]

As time passes Miranda's frequent journal entries stop dwelling almost exclusively on the present day's events and she begins to recall the more important incidents from her earlier life in the real world. In order to keep some perspective on her isolation with a madman she naturally begins to compare Clegg to the normal men she used to know. The most important of these is George Paston (the G.P. of the earlier quotation), an established painter of her father's age, with whom she had begun to spend a lot of time. In normal society her attraction to him had been mostly intellectual. Since he was intelligent and experienced he had made her think and question herself whenever they were together and as the diary develops G.P. continues to stimulate Miranda's mental growth as she reminiscences about their various past experiences. Indeed, G.P. becomes her philosophical mentor who, like Shakespeare's Prospero, gives this Miranda all the knowledge she needs to come to terms with herself and those around her.

Miranda's first thoughts about G.P. reveal just how young and inexperienced she actually is at the beginning of her section. As she considers marriage she pictures

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[24] Ibid., pp. 140-141.

herself eventually finding an ideal lover who has none of the faults of ordinary people. She is still too immature to understand that she must eventually marry another normal human being similar to herself.

> When I get away. What shall I do? I want to marry, I want to have children, I want to prove to myself that all marriages needn't be like D and M's. I know exactly the sort of person I want to marry, someone with a mind like G.P.'s only much nearer my own age, and with the looks I like. And without his one horrid weakness.[25]

Later, as she continues to ponder the meaning of her relationship with G.P., she realizes that he had always been primarily interested in her sexually. Yet, despite several opportunities when he could have seduced her, he had always stopped before doing so; leaving Miranda free to make her own decision about having sex with him.

> Of course G.P. was always trying to get me into bed. I don't know why but I see that more clearly now than I ever did at the time. He shocked me, bullied me, taunted me -- never in nasty ways. Obliquely. He didn't ever force me in any way. Touch me. I mean, he's respected me in a queer way. I don't think he really knew himself. He wanted to shock me -- to him or away from him, he didn't know. Left it to chance.[26]

Thus one sees that Paston and Clegg have similar asexual relationships with Miranda. Both are attracted to her because she symbolizes innocence to them. Clegg's immediate

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[25] Ibid., p. 151.

[26] Ibid., p. 192.

response is to try to defile and destroy this virtue since, like Shakespeare's Caliban, he is an inverted pastoral hero; a natural man against whom the civility and art which improves nature may be measured. G.P., on the other hand, represents Prospero and therefore he refuses to consummate his relationship with Miranda because that would be a defilement similar to that which Clegg wishes to achieve. Instead, G.P. understands through his experience and intelligence that the process of growth will eventually cause Miranda to choose to lose her innocence and when she decides that she is ready, he will be prepared to love her physically without having pushed her into something that she was not prepared to do.

As the first twenty-eight days of Miranda's confinement near an end Fowles uses his butterfly motif one last time to foreshadow the inevitable, sinister conclusion of Miranda's situation.

> I am one in a row of specimens. It's when I try to flutter out of line that he hates me. I'm meant to be dead, pinned, always the same, always beautiful. He knows that part of my beauty is being alive, but it's the dead me he wants. He wants me living-but-dead. I felt it strongly today. That my being alive and changing and having a separate mind and having moods and all that was becoming a nuisance.
>
> He is solid; immovable, iron-willed. He showed me one day what he called his killing-bottle. I'm imprisoned in it. Fluttering against the glass. Because I can see through it I still

> think I can escape. I have hope. But it's all an illusion.
> A thick round wall of glass.[27]

Then, also at this stage of the plot's development, the author tries to make a case for interpreting The Collector as a twentieth century parable of the privileged, intelligent "few" in conflict with the uneducated, impoverished "many" of England. In the first section of the novel Clegg has already pointedly remarked that there was always class, between himself and Miranda.[28] Moreover, earlier in her diary Miranda has said that she feels Clegg is a victim of his blind, jealous and apathetic social class -- "the great deadweight of the Calibanity of England".[29] Now, before going upstairs for their final meal together, after which Miranda is supposed to be given her freedom, she continues to develop this theme.

> Why should we tolerate their beastly Calibanity? Why should every vital and creative and good person be martyred by the great universal stodge around?
> In this situation I'm a representative.
> A martyr. Imprisoned, unable to grow. At the mercy of this resentment, this hateful millstone envy of the Calibans of this world.[30]

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[27] Ibid., p. 215.

[28] Ibid., p. 42.

[29] Ibid., p. 173.

[30] Ibid., pp. 217-218.

Unfortunately, however, the author's analogy does not quite hold together even though Clegg undoubtedly is a victim of his social background. For, unlike the deprived "many" of modern society, Clegg is pathological. His mind is chained to a literal, photographic perspective and he is unable to cope with abstractions or emotions. Unlike most of the "many" he cannot learn and consequently he contains no potential for moral or imaginative change. Therefore, the element of class conflict remains of minor significance to the novel despite the author's efforts to add extra importance to it. It is simply one of the many ways in which both the central characters are trapped.

As the reader already knows, Miranda is not released after she goes upstairs for dinner. When she realizes this she makes an unsuccessful, hysterical attempt to escape and as a result, after being returned to her basement prison, she is "raped" through the lens of Clegg's camera. Consequently Miranda finally understands that waiting and hoping for Clegg to let her go will not do any good. As she continues to ponder this new development in her ordeal she comes to an essentially existential conclusion about her situation.

> I've been sitting here and thinking about God. I don't think I believe in God any more. It is not only me, I think of all the millions who must have lived like this in the war. The Anne Franks. And back through history. What I feel I know now is that God doesn't intervene. He lets us suffer...

> Who is sad, who is not, he doesn't know, and he doesn't care. So he doesn't exist really.
> ... I see we have to live as if there is no God. Prayer and worship and singing hymns - all silly and useless... It's no good trusting vaguely in your luck, in Providence or God's being kind to you. You have to act and fight for yourself.[31]

So Miranda decides that she will break with her principles about never committing a violent act and try to kill Clegg. Although she is almost successful, the horror of actually attempting to kill another human being causes her to come to yet another important conclusion about what type of action she must use.

> I am ashamed. I let myself down vilely.
> I've come to a series of decisions. Thoughts. 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, sympathy and humanity.
>
> * * *
>
> I am a moral person. I am not ashamed of being moral. I will not let Caliban make me immoral; even though he deserves all my hatred and bitterness and an axe in his head.[32]

Thus, having been separated from her daily existence, Miranda has found it necessary to turn inward to find enough strength to endure her ordeal. In so doing she has defined the essential elements of her own being and has undergone a spiritual reawakening in a place which previously

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[31] Ibid., pp. 233-234.

[32] Ibid., pp. 238-239.

was a chapel. Therefore, she has completed the third basic structural element of Fowles's fundamental romance plot.

Through this dual process of self-definition and moral resolution Miranda has achieved a fully developed and mature humanity. Consequently she is now ready to accept full responsibility for her intelligence and privileged upbringing by attempting to use her knowledge to teach Clegg. In order to do so she must sacrifice her innocence, but as G.P. has already pointed out, the process of growth and maturity necessarily demands the loss of innocence.

> I've come to a tremendous decision today.
> I've imagined being in bed with him.
> It's useless just kissing him. I've got to give him such a tremendous shock that he'll have to release me. Because you can't very well imprison someone who's given herself to you.
>
> * * *
>
> Something will happen, I say. But nothing will, unless I make it.
> I must act.
> Another thing. I wrote (one writes things and the implications shriek - it's like suddenly realizing one's deaf), "I must fight with my weapons. Not his. Not selfishness and brutality and shame and resentment.
> Therefore with generosity (I give myself) and gentleness (I kiss the beast) and no-shame (I do what I do of my own free will) and forgiveness (he can't help himself).[33]

So Miranda decides to try to break her captor's perverse illusion with a reality. Through a sexual expression of shared humanity she hopes to establish a fully human

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[33] Ibid., pp. 247-248.

relationship with Caliban which even he cannot deny.

After her next bath Miranda does everything possible to seduce Clegg. But, unfortunately, sexual experience is unsatisfactory for his necrophiliac psyche. He can only derive pleasure from the passive contemplation of dead objects such as photographs and so instead of winning back her freedom she has only sacrificed her innocence and lost all of Clegg's remaining respect. When she becomes seriously ill it is obvious that the end of her ordeal is near.

The fourth basic structural element of Fowles's fundamental romance plot is that the central characters finally emerge from their mythic world to reconcile their old selves to their newly found romance perceptions. In this present variation of Fowles's plot, of course, it is clearly impossible for Miranda to do this. Nevertheless, her journal shows that if she had been given her freedom she could have applied the lessons of her ordeal effectively to her normal life. As was previously mentioned, Miranda had been so immature when she was captured that she had believed that she could find an ideal lover in the real world who would have G.P.'s mind but be younger, more sexually attractive and less immoral. Through her process of growth she now realizes that one must always love another person despite his faults since no one is ever perfect.

> I lay in bed last night and thought of G.P. I thought of being in bed with him. I wanted to be in bed with him. I wanted the marvellous, the fantastic ordinariness of him.
>
> * * *
>
> I shall go and have an affaire with G.P.
> I'll marry him if he wants.
> I want the adventure, the risk of marrying him.
> I'm sick of being young inexperienced.
> Clever at knowing but not at living.
> I want his children in me.[34]

Finally, in all Fowles's novels, whatever triumph the central characters may achieve is always spiritual, self-contained and seen in existential terms. In The Collector Miranda's death denies any possibility of a more complete victory. Yet, had she lived, optimism would certainly have been possible.

> A strange thought: I would not want this not to have happened. Because if I escape I shall be a completely different and I think better person. Because if I don't escape, if something dreadful happened, I shall still know that the person I was and would have stayed if this hadn't happened was not the person I now want to be.[35]

The two brief sections which end the novel provide a resolution of the plot which is dominated by pathos, irony and the author's own black humor. When Clegg's first section ended it seemed possible that he was about to experience his own spiritual awakening, but as the third

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[34] Ibid., pp. 256-257.

[35] Ibid., p. 261.

section begins it becomes clear that his mind is too diseased for this to happen. In her delirium Miranda mumbles the name G.P. and Clegg mistakenly supposes that she means general practitioner for it is obvious, even to him, that she needs medical attention. Then Miranda briefly returns to her senses for the last time and tells him that she has tried to help him and now he must try to help her. The last words she says are "I forgive you". But Clegg does not get a doctor even though he knows he should and so Miranda, like a butterfly inside the killing-bottle, slowly dies of asphyxiation. After her death Clegg still remains spiritually and morally estranged from all finer human qualities by showing that he contains no potential whatsoever for imaginative change. In traditional existential terms he is and remains totally unauthentic.

> I kept on thinking of her, thinking perhaps it was my fault after all that she did what she did and lost my respect, then I thought it was her fault, she asked for everything she got. Then I didn't know what to think ...[36]

The last of Fowles's six basic structural elements is that each novel ends with a new beginning and in the fourth section this is precisely what happens. Clegg discovers Miranda's journal as he prepares to bury her and ironically this gives him the strength to go on.

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[36] Ibid., p. 282.

> I thought I would just have a last look through her things. It was lucky I did - I found her diary which shows she never loved me, she only thought of herself and the other man all the time.[37]

So, as in all Fowles's fiction, the reader's last glimpse of the protagonist in this novel is precariously affirmative in its own demonic way.

> I have not made up my mind about Marian (Another M! I heard the supervisor call her name), this time it won't be love, it would just be for the interest of the thing and to compare them and also the other thing, which as I say I would like to go into in more detail and I could teach her how. And the clothes would fit. Of course I would make it clear from the start who's boss and what I expect.
>
> But it is still just an idea. I only put the stove down there today because the room needs drying out anyway.[38]

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[37] Ibid., p. 286.

[38] Ibid., p. 288.

CHAPTER THREE

THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN

In 1969 John Fowles published his third novel, The French Lieutenant's Woman, and like The Magus and The Collector this new work quickly became a popular success on both sides of the Atlantic. But unlike his earlier fiction, The French Lieutenant's Woman also immediately received internationally widespread critical acclaim since in this novel for the first time Fowles fully combines the power and sheer exuberance of his romances with a clearly intellectual endeavor. Primarily the author adds new depth and complexity to this version of his fundamental plot by developing an aspect of his work which first appeared in The Magus. In that novel Fowles obviously delighted in allowing Conchis to represent his own persona as novelist in order to put the reader through exactly the same process to which he subjects Nicholas Urfe. Certainly so many hopes and reversals are not absolutely necessary to the process of self-discovery which Nick undergoes and consequently the protagonist, in turn, is easily seen as a persona for the reader since one is forced to share with him his many expectations and puzzlements. As Nicholas Himself observes early in the novel, "I saw Conchis as a sort of novelist

sans novel creating with people not words."[1] Now in The French Lieutenant's Woman Fowles, as a Conchis-like novelist, first explicitly enters the fabric of his own story to deny omniscient control over his characters, and then he again returns at the end of the novel to abdicate the little power which he still possesses - forcing even the reader to eventually participate in resolving the plot. Thus as Charles Smithson and Sarah Woodruff gradually defeat the Victorian age's abstract social conventions as restrictions upon human relations, so Fowles as novelist defeats conventional author-character-reader relationships as restrictions upon the modern novel. Also helping to establish this third work as Fowles's most complex and sophisticated artistic vision is the author's shift in focus to the middleground of social experience. Whereas The Magus examined Maurice Conchis's extraordinary, almost super-human powers to meaningfully change Nick's personality and The Collector dealt with Frederick Clegg's demented and sub-human attempts to force Miranda Grey to become his dream-girl, The French Lieutenant's Woman is the first of Fowles's novels to explore the relationship of two normal human beings while still maintaining the mythic perspectives of his earlier work. Furthermore, by choosing Thomas Hardy's

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[1] The Magus, p. 229.

novels instead of Shakespeare's The Tempest as the most significant literary source for this book, Fowles makes an impressively talented departure from his previous style and technique of writing. Yet, even in the guise of an historical novel this Hardyesque romance continues to explore the main thematic concerns of the author's other fiction. Indeed, considering how much more refined and intricate the technical presentation of material is in this novel, it is remarkable how unchanged these central concerns remain. For, once again, Fowles is trying to establish a realization of the individual's need to learn to choose and control his own life, and, as the author himself readily admits, "my two previous novels were both based on more or less disguised existentialist premises. I want this one to be no exception; and so I am trying to show an existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible".[2] Also, even though Charles's problems ostensibly stem from his Victorian inhibitions his situation in the novel clearly resembles the fully modern one in The Magus where Nick jilts his ordinary girlfriend for an illusory, enigmatic, other woman. Consequently, this chapter will be

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[2]John Fowles, "Notes On An Unfinished Novel," Afterwords: Novelists On Their Novels, ed. by Thomas McCormack, Harper & Row (N.Y., N.Y., 1969), p. 165.

chiefly concerned with showing how the author's new presentation of material in The French Lieutenant's Woman continues to refine and perfect the thematic concerns which are contained in the basic romance situation of all his novels.

The first and more obvious of Fowles's two main thematic devices is the specifically physical layout of each novel through which the author innovatively reveals his theme. In this third work, as was briefly mentioned, a Victorian pastiche style is used to show Charles Smithson's gradual evolution from a complacent, well-adjusted rationalist of the Victorian Age to an alienated, embittered and lonely existentialist of the modern world. Not only does the use of this older form of literature conveniently allow Fowles to go backwards in history to reveal the origins of modern existential thought by showing the forces in the previous age which were responsible for bringing it about, but also, by writing within the literary conventions of that period, the author creates in the reader's mind a very real sense of English life as it was for the protagonist in the secure and well integrated pre-Darwinian world of a century ago. Certainly the consistently used ironic, omniscient tone of the Victorian novel is well suited to the retrospective look at our ancestors which The French Lieutenant's Woman provides, and the carefully chosen

epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter use the quoted wisdom and new truths of that era to help define Charles's situation. Also, the Victorian custom of sudden authorial intrusion into the narrative of a work, which was originally used in the nineteenth century to intensify illusion, is now used throughout this novel to dispel illusion and remind the reader that in reality a modern fiction is being presented. Even the mirroring of the plot in master-servant love affairs, the extended pictorial descriptions of place and character, and the sensational suspension of meaning and event all contribute to Fowles's masterful evocation of the Victorian mid-century.

Although Fowles's novels characteristically begin with a precisely fixed location of time and place which gives the reader the illusion of starting realistic fiction, it is obvious that this particular variation of the author's fundamental plot is instead designed to give the reader the illusion of starting a straight forward Victorian pastiche. Consequently, even though the scene for The French Lieutenant's Woman is well set by the detailed description of Lyme Regis and the coast of Ware Cleeves to its West which dominates the first chapter, the reader is still not given enought of the historical context of Charles's situation by the author merely writing within the conventions of the Victorian age and by his beginning the

book on an "Incisively sharp and blustery morning in the late March of 1867"[3] to fully appreciate the novel. For, in order to understand the protagonist's dilemma in 1867 it is first necessary that one has a real sense of the tremendous ferment and change that was beginning to effect every aspect of English life at that time. Therefore, throughout the first few chapters as Fowles continues in Hardyesque fashion to individually introduce the various characters within his drama, he carefully stresses many of the rapidly shifting aspects of the Victorian world. For instance, even before Charles and his fiancée, Ernestina Freeman, encounter the black dressed figure from myth standing at the end of the quay in Chapter One, the changing styles in both men's and women's fashions have been noted.

> The young lady was dressed in the height of fashion, for another wind was blowing in 1867: the beginning of a revolt against the crinoline and the large bonnet. The eye in the telescope might have glimpsed a magenta skirt of an almost daring narrowness--and shortness, since two white ankles could be seen beneath the rich green coat and above the black boots that delicately trod the revetment; and perched over the netted chignon, one of the impertinent little flat "pork-pie" hats with a delicate tuft of egret plumes at the side--a millinery style that the resident ladies of Lyme would not dare to wear for at least another year; while the taller man, impeccably in a light gray,

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[3] John Fowles, The French Lieutenant's Woman, Signet Books (N.Y., N.Y., 1970), p. 9. All further references to this novel will be taken from this edition.

> with his top hat held in his free hand, had severely reduced his dundrearies, which the arbiters of the best English male fashion had declared a shade vulgar—that is, risible to the foreigner—a year or two previously.[4]

Next, in Chapter Two the reader's attention is immediately drawn to the furor that had been caused among the intelligent, well-educated people of the day by the implications of the radically new discoveries of scientists like Lyell and Darwin.

> "I confess your worthy father and I had a small philosophical disagreement."
> "That is very wicked of you."
> "I meant it to be very honest of me."
> "And what was the subject of your conversation?"
> "Your father ventured the opinion that Mr. Darwin should be exhibited in a cage in the Zoological gardens. In the monkey house. I tried to explain some of the scientific arguments behind the Darwinian position. I was unsuccessful. Et Voilà tout."
> "How could you--when you know papa's views!"[5]

Although the political climate in England was relatively stable at that time Fowles further helps the reader to place the age by mentioning Marx and the important political philosophy he was then developing.

> The 'sixties had been indisputably prosperous; an affluence had come to the artisanate and even to the laboring classes that made the possibility of revolution recede, at least in Great Britain, almost out of mind. Needless to say, Charles knew nothing of the beavered German Jew quietly working, as it so happened, that very afternoon in the British Museum library; and whose work in those somber walls was to bear such bright red fruit.

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[4]Ibid., p. 10.

[5]Ibid., p. 12.

> Had you described that fruit, or the subsequent effects of its later indiscriminate consumption, Charles would almost certainly not have believed you--and even though, in only six months from this March of 1867, the first volume of Kapital was to appear in Hamburg.[6]

Similarly, in Chapter Four where the reader first meets that easily recognizable Dickens or Hardy type - the dreadful bigot, Mrs. Poulteney - Fowles mentions in passing that the winter before when she had been slightly ill was the "winter also of the fourth great cholera onslaught on Victorian Britain."[7] However, Fowles's most important indication of England's mood in those tumultuous years is found in the Seventh Chapter when Charles's servant, Sam Farrow, is first introduced.

> Of course to us any Cockney servant called Sam evokes immediately the immortal Weller; and it was certainly from that background that this Sam had emerged. But thirty years had passed since Pickwick Papers first coruscated into the world. Sam's love of the equine was not really very deep. He was more like some modern working-class man who thinks a keen knowledge of cars a sign of his social progress. He even knew of Sam Weller, not from the book, but from a stage version of it, and knew the times had changed... his wrong a's and h's were not really comic; they were signs of a social revolution, and this was something Charles failed to recognize.[8]

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[6] Ibid., p. 16.

[7] Ibid., p. 23.

[8] Ibid., pp. 39-40.

> But the difference between Sam Weller and Sam Farrow (that is, between 1836 and 1867) was this: the first was happy with his role, the second suffered it.[9]

Having precisely fixed the time and place of this novel in the reader's mind, Fowles starts to develop the plot of his story in Chapter Eight when Charles leaves his rooms at the White Lion on a beautiful day in early spring only to find upon his arrival at Aunt Tranter's house that his fiancée has "passed a slightly disturbed night" and wishes to rest. In order to fill the time and also to enjoy the weather Charles decides to spend the day pursuing his main interest, paleontology, on Ware Cliffs. For, in the fossiliferous blue lias stones along the shore of these cliffs it is easy to find examples of petrified sea urchins (known also as tests) which represent one of the first practical confirmations of the theory of evolution. As an ardent Darwinist these tests had special significance for Charles since they also disproved the main principle of the then still widely accepted Linnaean Scala Natura which said that it was impossible for a new species to enter the world, a principle which, as Fowles hastens to add, helps explain the Victorian obsession with classifying and naming and fossilizing the existent.

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[9] Ibid., p. 41.

> [Charles] knew that Nulla Species Nova was rubbish; yet he saw in the strata an immensely reassuring orderliness in existence. He might perhaps have seen a very contemporary social symbolism in the way these gray-blue ledges were crumbling; but what he did see was a kind of edificiality of time, in which inexorable laws very conveniently arranged themselves for the survival of the fittest and best, exemplia gratia Charles Smithson, this fine spring day, alone, eager and inquiring, understanding, accepting, noting and grateful. What was lacking, of course, was the corollary of the collapse of the ladder of nature: that if new species can come into being, old species very often have to make way for them. Personal extinction Charles was aware of - no Victorian could not be. But general extinction was as absent a concept from his mind that day as the smallest cloud from the sky above him.[10]

The second and more important thematic device which Fowles consistently uses in his work is the creation of a single image which develops the central motif in each novel. Throughout The French Lieutenant's Woman it is this image of Charles Smithson's passion for collecting fossils and studying evolution which metaphorically foreshadows how he, like many other aristocrats of the Victorian age, has been naturally selected for extinction by an aggressive, rapidly rising middle class more fit to survive. For, as the above quotation shows, Charles only partially understands the implications of Darwin's theory of evolution which forms the novel's central motif. Since he is privileged and intelligent he mistakenly assumes that he is the end product

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[10] Ibid., p. 45.

of natural selection. He does not realize that it is social convention and not personal merit which gives him his advantages and he fails to understand that in Darwin's theory it is impossible to pre-determine which organisms will adapt, nor in which direction, nor for what purpose. Indeed, the motif of evolution is not applicable just to Charles's situation in this novel. As the plot progresses Sarah too evolves from her role as Mrs. Poulteney's obedient companion to become Dante Gabriel Rossetti's personal model, while Sam who begins the book as Charles's servant eventually adapts himself to a successful career in advertising. Even Mary also evolves with the times from a country housemaid to become an urban mother who is the mistress of her own home.

As Charles labors over the rocks along the shore in his stout nailed boots, heavy flannel breeches, tight and absurdly long coat, canvas hat, massive ashplant and voluminous rucksack one is already aware how divorced from the mainstream of English life he is. Apart from his interest in paleontology the protagonist is simply a gentleman of leisure who lacks even the responsibility of managing an estate. The most prominent symptom of his wealth is his "tranquil boredom,"[11] toying with ideas is his chief

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[11] Ibid., p. 16.

occupation"[12] and laziness is his "distinguishing trait".[13] Now one learns that Charles is even estranged from his claret swilling and fox-hunting relations in the aristocracy due both to his intelligence and his perception of English life.

> If we take this obsession with dressing the part, with being prepared for every eventuality, as more stupidity, blindness to the empirical, we make, I think, a grave - or rather a frivolous - mistake about our ancestors; because it was men not unlike Charles, and as overdressed and over-equipped as he was that day, who laid the foundations of all our modern science. Their folly in that direction was no more than a symptom of their seriousness in a much more important one. They sensed that current accounts of the world were inadequate; that they had allowed their windows on reality to become smeared by convention, religion, social stagnation; they knew, in short, that they had things to discover, and that the discovery was of the utmost importance to the future of man.[14]

Eventually this alienated aristocrat pauses to look at his watch and discovering that it is almost two o'clock he begins a hasty return to Lyme. But the tide has now come in and his previous route along the shore has become impassible. Consequently he turns to a steep but safe path up the cliff to the dense, isolated woods above, which are locally referred to as the undercliff. Having quenched his thirst at a nearby stream the protagonist starts towards

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[12] Ibid., p. 18.

[13] Ibid., p. 19.

[14] Ibid., p. 44.

the town but in this wild, seemingly idyllic place he begins to feel strangely uncomfortable.

> "It was this place, an English Garden of Eden on such a day as March 29th., 1867, that Charles had entered when he had climbed the shore from Pinhay Bay.[15]
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> Only one art has ever caught such scenes - that of the Renaissance; it is the ground that Bothicelli's figures walk on, the air that includes Ronsard's songs. It does not matter what this cultural revolution's conscious aims and purposes, its cruelties and failures were; in essence the Renaissance was simply the green end of one of civilization's hardest winters. It was an end to chains, bounds, frontiers. Its device was the only device: What is, is good. It was all, in short, that Charles's age was not; but do not think that as he stood there he did not know this. It is true that to explain his obscure feeling of malaise, of inappropriateness, of limitation, he went back closer home - to Rousseau, and the childish myths of a Golden Age and the Noble Savage. That is, he tried to dismiss the inadequacies of his own time's approach to nature by supposing that one cannot reenter a legend. He told himself he was too pampered, too spoiled by civilization, ever to inhabit nature again; and that made him sad, in a not unpleasant bittersweet sort of way.[16]

The second basic structural element found in all Fowles's fiction is that the protagonist of each work soon shows himself to be alienated from his homeland and invariably he begins a solitary journey into a timeless dimension of myth or legend far removed from the realm of

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[15]Ibid., p. 59.

[16]Ibid., p. 60.

ordinary social reality. At this point in the novel the second structural element is clearly complete. This alienated gentleman has, by chance, entered a mythical Garden of Eden so wild and isolated that it has remained untouched by time and change. He has come there looking for fossil tests but as he heads towards Lyme Regis through this mysterious pastoral world he will find instead the sexual and psychological test of Sarah Woodruff; an encounter that will eventually lead him to the more disturbing side of Darwin's ideas.

Predictably, Charles soon becomes lost in the undercliff's rough terrain and in order to reorient himself he works his way back towards the sea. When he reaches the cliff's edge he sees a sleeping figure on the ledge below him. Although his first impulse is to withdraw his curiosity nevertheless draws him forward and as he peers over the edge he realizes that he has discovered a woman lying in the complete abandonment of deep sleep. Charles immediate finds this scene intensely tender and yet sexual and despite himself he remains staring down at her. He recognizes her as "the French Lieutenant's woman" that he and Tina had seen on the quay the day before. But, observing her in this idyllic setting, he feels certain that she is innocent of any wrongdoing. Eventually his stare causes her to awaken and Charles disconcertedly apologizes

before continuing on his way.

As he reaches the outskirts of Lyme Charles stops at a dairy for a bowl of milk and while he is drinking it this same woman passes by on the road. But now that the protagonist is once again outside the undercliff's mythic domain the dairyman wastes no time telling him that the innocent looking lady is merely a whore. Unable to accept this, Charles chivalrously sets out to catch the black and bonnetted figure in order to show her that not everyone in her world is a barbarian.

> "Madam!"
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> She turned, to see him hatless, smiling; and although her expression was one of now ordinary enough surprise, once again that face had an extraordinary effect on him. It was as if after each sight of it, he could not believe its effect, and had to see it again. It seemed to both envelop and reject him; as if he was a figure in a dream, both standing still and yet always receding.
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> "I owe you two apologies. I did not know yesterday that you were Mrs. Poulteney's secretary. I fear I addressed you in a most impolite manner."
>
> She stared down at the ground. "It's no matter, sir."
>
> "And just now when I seemed ... I was afraid lest you had been taken ill."
>
> Still without looking at him, she inclined her head and turned to walk on.
>
> "May I not accompany you? Since we walk in the same direction?"
>
> She stopped, but did not turn. "I prefer to walk alone.
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> * * *
>
> He looked round, trying to imagine why she should not wish it known that she came among these

> innocent woods. A man, perhaps; some assignation? But then he remembered her story.[17]

When Charles finally returns to Aunt Tranter's house he decides to tell Tina nothing of his two encounters since he knows he would be lying if he tried to dismiss them lightly.

In the next chapter Fowles suddenly interrupts his tale to shatter the illusion that one is reading a traditional, historical romance and makes it clear that in reality this is a modern, experimental novel which is using traditional materials in a new way. In so doing the author is chiefly concerned with defining for the reader the new relationship which exists for him between the novelist and his characters. For the establishment of freedom and not authority as the main principle in his fiction is a necessary prelude both to his own entrance into the fabric of his story and to his eventual abandonment of the tale while it is still in progress so that the reader too will be forced to reject his traditional role as a passive, uninvolved spectator of the action in order to freely resolve the plot for himself.

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

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[17] Ibid., pp. 74-75.

> world that is. Or was. This is why we cannot plan. We know 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 and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live. When Charles left Sarah on her cliff edge, I ordered him to walk straight back to Lyme Regis. But he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy.
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> ... the idea seemed to me to come clearly from Charles not myself. It is not only that he has begun to gain an autonomy; I must respect it, and disrespect all my quasi-divine plans for him, if I wish him to be real.
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> In other words, to be free myself, I must give him, and Tina, and Sarah, even the abominable Mrs. Poulteney, their freedom as well. There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist. And I must conform to that definition.
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> The novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but in the new theological image, with freedom our first principle, not authority.[18]

Thus, having established the main premise of his new theory of literature, Fowles continues to develop his plot in Chapter Fourteen.

The next morning Charles, Tina and Aunt Tranter make their obligatory social visit to Marlborough House. As the protagonist dutifully suffers through the ladies' dreary chatter he observes that Sarah is merely playing a part as she sits obediently in the study. Moreover, besides

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[18] Ibid., pp. 81-82.

noticing this capacity for drama, Charles shares a glance with Sarah after Tina has inadvertently helped Mrs. Poulteney to snub him and Aunt Tranter for the behavior of their respective servants, which clearly indicates to him that Sarah shares his opinion of this bigoted woman.

After this visit Charles spends five uneventful days with his fiancée discussing the furnishings for their as yet unfound house. When he is finally excused to spend an afternoon searching for tests, the protagonist immediately knows where he wants to go and without delay he sets out for the place where he had seen Sarah sleeping. As he mounts a steep path along the cliff's edge he again meets her coming in the opposite direction. Charles now notices that her eyes cannot conceal either her intelligence or her independent spirit and also he associates her face with foreign beds and guesses that this woman has many darker qualities. Yet, since he is a Darwinist, Charles does not blame Sarah for her "fallen" appearance in this English Garden of Eden because both Darwin's further theories of determinism and behaviorism exhonerate her of any responsibility for having been born with such a strong aura of sexuality. As he chivalrously begins to offer Sarah assistance to find a new job they hear the voices of two men approaching and swiftly Sarah conceals herself in the bushes. When they have gone Charles tells her that he

doesn't feel it was necessary for her to hide but Sarah is far more aware of the necessity to obey Victorian social customs in rural areas than he is, and with a bitter voice she reminds him that "No gentleman who cares for his good name can be seen with the scarlet woman of Lyme." Once again the protagonist renews his offer to help her find a new position but she replies that she is unable to leave Lyme. Charles asks if it is because of an attachment to the French lieutenant but as she enigmatically continues on her way she tells him only that the French lieutenant is married.

Two days later Tina develops a migraine headache and so Charles once again finds himself with a free afternoon. This time he tries to ban all thoughts of paleontology and women on sunlit ledges from his mind, but the events of Lyme are so few and so dull that within half an hour he is passing the dairy and entering the woods of Ware Commons. Soon he is surprised to see Sarah standing above the path some forty yards ahead. Her hair is loose as if she had been in the wind although it is a calm day and because she is not wearing nailed boots Charles realizes that she must have moved with great caution to get there without his having already seen her. Therefore, he guesses that she must have deliberately followed him. First Sarah hands Charles two excellent tests and then she thanks him for his previous offer of assistance. Charles is about to leave when she

looks at him imploringly and adds that she has no one to turn to. He again suggests that she leave Lyme but she plies by saying that she is weak, has sinned, and if she goes to the city she will surely become what many in Lyme already call her. This unexpected confession obscurely flatters Charles by making him feel like a clergyman consulted on some spiritual problem and despite his Victorian impulse to classify, name and fossilize the existent he realizes that no single label such as "whore" or "melancholia" can fully explain this girl. In existential terms he is beginning to discover that no individual is exhaustively describable in idealistic or scientific terms.

> There was a longer silence. 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 semiliterary terms, one it is sufficient merely to classify under some general heading (man with alcoholic problems, woman with unfortunate past, and so on) becomes subjective; becomes unique; becomes, by empathy, instantaneously shared rather than observed. Such a metamorphosis took place in Charles's mind as he stared at the bowed head of the sinner before him.[19]

Next Sarah begs Charles to let her tell him the full story of her affaire with the French lieutenant and when Charles protests that any greater intimacy between them is impossible in his present circumstances, she sinks to her knees before him. Horrified that someone might see them in such a

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[19] Ibid., p. 115.

compromising position Charles leads her into the foliage and with her standing before him with her face in her hands he has to struggle not to touch her. Amazed and bewildered the protagonist attempts to protest against any further meeting between them:

> But she was still looking up at him then; and his words tailed off into silence. Charles, as you will have noticed, had more than one vocabulary. With Sam in the morning, with Ernestina across a gay lunch, and here in the role of Alarmed Propriety... he was almost three different men... We may explain it biologically by Darwin's phrase: cryptic coloration, survival by learning to blend with one's surroundings - with the unquestioned assumptions of one's age or social caste... Very few Victorians chose to question the virtues of such cryptic coloration; but there was that in Sarah's look which did. Though direct it was a timid look. Yet behind it lay a very modern phrase: Come clean, Charles, come clean. It took the recipient off balance. Ernestina and her like behaved always as if habited in glass: infinitely fragile, even when they threw books of poetry. They encouraged the mask, the safe distance; and this girl, behind her facade of humility forbade it.[20]

Consequently, against his better judgement Charles agrees to meet her again one last time, hear her story and give his advice. But as he strides back to Lyme through this paradise Fowles adds that Charles knew he was about to engage in the forbidden[21] and this time Charles does not even contemplate telling Tina about his encounter in the woods.

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[20] Ibid., pp. 118-119.

[21] Ibid., p. 120.

Like Conchis in The Magus or G.P. in The Collector a philosophical mentor appears in each of Fowles's novels to guide the protagonist's enlightenment and in The French Lieutenant's Woman it is the grizzled little Irishman, Dr. Grogan, who fulfills this function. Since Aunt Tranter is a spinster and Grogan is a confirmed bachelor of approximately her age, Charles invites the doctor to join Tina and himself that night in his rooms at the White Lion for a surprise dinner for Tina's Aunt. Afterwards, the two men, who have immediately become friends, return alone to the doctor's residence for a glass of grog and a Burmah cheroot. After discovering that they share not only similar political opinions but also a common belief in Darwin the conversation then drifts to Sarah Woodruff and Marlborough House. In confidence the older Irishman gives Charles his diagnosis of Sarah's problem and the real reason she refuses to leave Lyme Regis.

> He stood over Charles, and directed the words into him with pointed finger. "It was as if the woman had become addicted to melancholia as one becomes addicted to opium. Now do you see how it is? Her sadness becomes her happiness. She wants to be a sacrificial victim, Smithson. Where you and I flinch back, she leaps forward. She is possessed, you see." He sat down again. "Dark indeed. Very dark."
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> There was a silence between the two men. Charles threw the stub of his cheroot into the fire. For a moment it flamed. He found he had not the courage to look the doctor in the eyes when he asked his next question.
>
> "And she has confided the real state of her mind to no one?"

> "Her closest friend is certainly Mrs. Talbot. But she tells me the girl keeps mum even with her. I flatter myself... but I most certainly failed."
> "And if ... let us say she could bring herself to reveal the feelings she is hiding to some sympathetic other person---"
> "She would be cured."[22]

Having had this conversation with the little doctor Charles is now completely able to rationalize his secret meetings with Sarah despite the obvious impropriety of his actions within the Victorian age's social context. Consequently, two days later he eagerly sets off for the undercliff and his next rendezvous with this mysterious woman.

> Dr. Grogan's little remark about the comparative priority to be accorded the dead and the living had germinated, and Charles now saw a scientific as well as a humanitarian reason in his adventure. He had been frank enough to admit to himself that it contained, besides the impropriety, an element of pleasure; but now he detected a clear element of duty. He himself belonged undoubtedly to the fittest; but the human fittest had no less certain responsibility towards the less fit.[23]

As planned, he finds her waiting for him at the far end of a tunnel of ivy and after continuing on together to an even more secluded spot he begins to coax a confession out of her. Soon she has told him how she met Varguennes, followed him to Weymouth, gave herself to him and by marrying shame broke out of the confined life she had lived

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[22] Ibid., p. 127.

[23] Ibid., p. 134.

as a governess in Mrs. Talbot's house. Although Charles does not really understand the type of freedom Sarah is talking about, the setting in which this confession takes place and the fact that a beautiful woman is freely revealing her darkest secrets to him causes the protagonist to imagine himself becoming part of a world which Victorian England would certainly never permit.

> Thus to Charles the openness of Sarah's confession - both so open in itself and in the open sunlight - seemed less to present a sharper reality than to offer a glimpse of an ideal world. It was not strange because it was more real, but because it was less real; a mythical world where naked beauty mattered far more than naked truth ... and yet so remote--as remote as some abbey of Thélème, some land of sinless, swooning idyll, in which Charles and Sarah and Ernestina could have wandered...[24]

It is only when Sam and Mary almost discover them together in the woods that the protagonist is brought back to the reality of his situation and as he goes back to Lyme he tells himself how foolish he has been and how lucky it is that he has escaped unscathed.

In each of Fowles's novels the protagonist's situation invariably turns slowly from romance to ordeal and Charles's real troubles first begin when he returns to the White Lion and finds a telegram from Sir Robert Smithson at Winsyatt waiting for him. It requests that he visit as

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[24] Ibid., pp. 143-144.

soon as possible "for most important reasons".[25] Since an immediate departure allows Charles to avoid more lies of omission to Tina and also because he secretly suspects his bachelor uncle is about to offer him the manor house as a wedding present, Charles departs that day. However, upon his arrival, Charles learns to his dismay that Uncle Robert has decided to marry, despite his age, and should his future wife, Mrs. Bella Tomkins, have any children then Charles must forfeit both his title and the family fortune.

Upon his return to Lyme Charles's bitter disappointment concerning his diminished prospects are further aggravated by Tina's immature outrage over his bad luck.

> She looked up and saw how nervously stern he was; that she must play a different role. She ran to him, and catching his hand raised it to her lips. He drew her to him and kissed the top of her head, but he was not deceived. A shrew and a mouse may look the same; but they are not the same; and though he could not find a word to describe Ernestina's reception of his shocking and unwelcome news, it was not far removed from "unladylike." He had leaped straight from the trap bringing him back from Exeter into Aunt Tranter's house; and expected a gentle sympathy, not a sharp rage, however, flatteringly it was intended to resemble his own feelings. Perhaps that was it--that she had not divined that a gentleman could never reveal the anger she ascribed to him. But there seemed to him something only too reminiscent of the draper's daughter in her during those first minutes; of one who had been worsted in a business deal, and who lacked a traditional imperturbability, that fine aristocratic refusal to allow the setbacks of life ever to ruffle one's style.[26]

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[25] Ibid., p. 153.

[26] Ibid., p. 162.

Indeed, throughout the novel as Charles's relationship with Sarah has become more intimate his confidence in Ernestina as a suitable marriage partner has been steadily declining. After only seeing Sarah twice he went to the assembly rooms with Tina and her Aunt and during a rather poor recital,

> ... he caught himself stealing glances at the girl beside him - looking at her as if he saw her for the first time, as if she were a total stranger to him. She was very pretty, charming ... but was not that face a little characterless, a little monotonous with its one set paradox of demureness and dryness. If you took away those two qualities what remained? A vapid selfishness... It was a fixed article of Charles's creed that he was not like the great majority of his peers and contemporaries. That was why he had traveled so much... So? In this vital matter of the woman with whom he had elected to share his life, had he not been only too conventional?
>
> ... His future had always seemed to him of vast potential; and now suddenly it was a fixed voyage to a known place. She had reminded him of that.[27]

Furthermore, soon after his arrival in Lyme, Charles had begun to miss the freedom of his many years of bachelorhood. "It was still strange to him to find that his mornings were not his own; that the plans of an afternoon might have to be sacrificed to some whim of Tina's,"[28] and, after spending several rainy days indoors discussing furnishings with the ladies "there had come ragingly upon him the old travel lust that he had believed himself to have grown out of those

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[27] Ibid., pp. 106-107.

[28] Ibid., p. 94.

last years".[29] Finally, Charles's increasing doubts about Tina's suitability as a wife are revealed even more strongly at Winsyatt when the protagonist is shown a picture of Mrs. Bella Tompkins.

> There was, curiously, some faint resemblance to Sarah in the face; and a subtle new dimension was added to Charles's sense of humiliation and dispossession. Sarah was a woman of profound inexperience, and this was a woman of the world; but both in their very different ways - his uncle was right - stood apart from the great niminy-piminy flock of women in general. For a moment he felt himself like a general in command of a weak army looking over the strong dispositions of the enemy; he foresaw only too clearly the result of a confrontation between Ernestina and the future Lady Smithson. It would be a rout.[30]

Now, on top of this growing uncertainty, the progagonist finds himself in the disagreeable position of having to become Tina's financial dependent in marriage.

When the protagonist returns to his rooms at the White Lion, however, he has no time to consider Miss Freeman any further, for during his absence Sarah has been dismissed from Marlborough house for walking on Ware Commons. Waiting for him is a note she has sent, pleading for his help and asking him to meet her one last time.

Not knowing what to do Charles goes to Dr. Grogan for advice. The doctor soon realizes that Charles is half

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[29] Ibid., p. 112.

[30] Ibid., p. 173.

in love with Sarah. He tells him that in his present circumstances he must certainly not meet her again and he tries to convince the protagonist that Sarah has deliberately gotten herself dismissed to encourage his pity. Grogan says that he will meet her instead and have her sent to an asylum where she can get proper medical attention. But, once Charles returns to his hotel room, he decides that it was wrong to let Grogan judge her for him. He is not able to accept the doctor's attempt to dehumanize his relationship with Sarah simply by turning it into a psychological case classified under the general heading of "melancholia." So at dawn he sets off towards the undercliff ahead of Grogan. Thus, he has decided to ignore Darwin's theory of cryptic coloration: survival by learning to blend with the unquestioned assumptions of one's age. Instead, in the undercliff's mythical pastoral world Charles is symbolically about to taste the forbidden fruit of the Victorian age.

When Charles finds Sarah in the dairyman's deserted hut he sees in her face a "wildness of innocence, almost an eagerness" and feels certain that Grogan's "clinical horrors"[31] of the night before could not be the truth of her situation. Then after several moments of mutually repressed emotion Sarah falls to her knees and openly admits

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[31]Ibid., p. 197.

to him that she intentionally let Mrs. Fairly see her on Ware Commons because she knew that Mrs. Fairly would tell Mrs. Poulteney.

> What control Charles had felt himself gaining now slipped from his grasp again. He stared down at the upraised face before him. He was evidently being asked for forgiveness; but he himself was asking for guidance, since the doctor's had failed him again...
>
> He slowly reached out his hands and raised her. Their eyes remained on each other's as if they were both hypnotized. She seemed to him— or those wide, those drowning eyes seemed— the most ravishingly beautiful he had ever seen. What lay behind them did not matter. The moment overcame the age.
>
> He took her into his arms, saw her eyes close as she swayed into his embrace; then closed his own and found her lips.[32]

But as their embrace ends Charles turns to the doorway and discovers to his horror that Sam and Mary have, by coincidence, arrived at the hut in time to see them together. Blushing and embarrassed the protagonist tells Sam to keep what he has seen to himself and to make sure that Mary does the same. Once they have gone, Charles quickly informs Sarah that there is talk in the town of sending her to an asylum. He gives her some money and advises her to take a coach to Exeter immediately; adding that business calls him to London without further delay. Thus one sees that in their four woodland meetings Charles

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[32] Ibid., p. 199.

and Sarah have attempted to stand outside their own time and history by ignoring the social conventions and morality of their age. Yet, once their socially unacceptable love starts to become known to themselves and those around them they experience a symbolic fall from grace and are forced out of this English Garden of Eden to accept the consequences of their actions in the outside world.

As Sarah heads towards Exeter "notoriously a place to hide ... from the stern moral tide that swept elsewhere through the life of the country"[33] the protagonist's ordeal begins to grow much more intense. After saying goodbye to Tina he leaves for London to inform his prospective father-in-law personally of his diminished prospects.

Mr. Freeman received Charles cordially enough at his house overlooking Hyde Park but clearly Charles's new situation causes a change in the relationship between the two men. Mr. Freeman wonders if Charles knew of his uncle's probable marriage before he proposed to Tina and, in any case, malicious gossip will now certainly surround the marriage to the effect that Ernestina has lost the title she could so easily have bought elsewhere. As the conversation continues Charles begins to get the disagreeable impression that he has now become a favored employee and soon Mr. Freeman comes to the point. He reminds Charles that he will

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[33] Ibid., p. 217.

no longer have an estate which will need managing and then he suggests that Charles join him in trade.

> "I would have you repeat what you said, what was it, about the purpose of this theory of evolution. A species must change ...?
> "In order to survive. It must adapt itself to changes in the environment."
> "Just so ..."
> Charles did indeed by this time feel like a badly stitched sample napkin, in all ways a victim of evolution. Those old doubts about the futility of his existence were only too easily reawakened. He guessed now what Mr. Freeman really thought of him: he was an idler. And what he proposed for him: that he should earn his wife's dowry... The abstract idea of evolution was indeed 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...[34]

Back on the street, Charles wanders aimlessly for awhile, a "poor living fossil, as the brisker and fitter forms of life jostled busily before him"[35] until eventually he finds himself standing in front of Mr. Freeman's great store.

> 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. Yet Charles stood on the pavement opposite and closed his eyes, as if he hoped he might obliterate it forever.
> To be sure there was something base in his rejection-- a mere snobbism, a letting himself be judged and swayed by an audience of ancestors. There was something lazy in it; a fear of work, of routine, of concentration on detail...

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[34] Ibid., pp. 227-229.

[35] Ibid., p. 230.

> But there was one noble element in his rejection: a sense that the pursuit of money was an insufficient purpose in life. 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.[36]
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> * * *
>
> ... underlying all, at least in Charles, was the doctrine of the survival of the fittest, and most especially an aspect of it he had discussed-- and it had been a discussion bathed in optimism-- with Grogan that night in Lyme: 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-- as even the Freeman's conceded-- then at least one was granted a choice of methods.[37]

Having thus begun to realize the need for each individual to learn to freely choose and control his own life Charles decides that it is time he had one last fling as a bachelor, and without delay he heads towards his club for a milk punch and champagne.

At the club Charles meets two old school friends, Sir Tom and Nathaniel, the younger son of a bishop. After getting very inebriated over supper, the three take a coach to Ma Terpsichore's whore house. Charles enjoys the less

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[36] Ibid., pp. 232-233.

[37] Ibid., p. 234.

obscene preambles but as the clothes fall off so does his drunkenness and although he is sexually aroused he becomes revolted by the despair and youth of the prostitutes. So he leaves and takes a hansom through the Haymarket towards his London home. But on the way he sees a streetwalker who at first glance resembles Sarah, and on impulse he stops the cab and goes with her to her room. Her name, by sentimental irony, is also Sarah. Charles then proceeds to drink more hock and just as he is about to have sexual intercourse with her he becomes violently ill. When Charles recovers a little this other Sarah leaves to find him a cab and while she is gone her baby awakens in the next room. Now Charles's grotesque nausea turns to fatherly solicitation, and in a scene which foreshadows the penultimate ending of the novel the protagonist goes to the child and uses his watch to stop the crying. While doing so his sense of irony is restored and this, in turn, gives him back some faith in himself.

> Charles's was the very opposite of the Sartrean experience. The simple furniture around him, the warm light from the next room, the humble shadows, above all the small being he held on his knees, so insubstantial after its mother's weight (but he did not think at all of her), they were not encroaching or hostile objects, but constituting and friendly ones. The ultimate hell was infinite and empty space; and they kept it at bay. He felt suddenly able to face his future, which was only a form of that terrible emptiness. Whatever happened to him such moments would recur; must be found, and could be found.

> A door opened. The prostitute stood in the light. Charles could not see her face, but he guessed that she was for a moment alarmed. And then relieved.[38]

As he leaves he puts five sovereigns on the table and tells this Sarah that she is "a brave kind girl". He has been unable to classify her simply as a whore and deny her a full humanity. Moreover, he has been equally incapable of violating the natural love between this mother and her child. The personalization of his relationship to this Sarah now makes possible the complete personalization of his relationship with Sarah Woodruff later in the novel.

The next morning Charles receives a note from Miss Woodruff which simply gives the name of an Exeter hotel. Then, still hung over, he makes his first fatal mistake while talking to Sam. Sam tells him that he and Mary are planning to get married when Charles's own wedding is over and he hopes that Charles will lend him the money to open a haberdashery. Sam already knows that he has lost the possibility of becoming the head servant at Winsyatt and he suspects that the marriage to Ernestina may never take place. Now, when Charles refuses to loan him such a relatively small sum of money, Sam begins to think seriously of blackmail or treachery.

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[38] Ibid., pp. 252-253.

Since Charles has now personally informed Mr. Freeman of his diminished prospects he immediately begins the return journey to Lyme Regis. When the train arrives at Exeter Sam comes forward from his second class compartment and asks his master if he intends to stay the night. But, the protagonist feels unable to face any more prevarication with Sam, and without hesitation he orders a four wheel carriage to finish the journey. Only at the Eastern outskirts of Exeter does Charles feel any sense of loss or sadness. He realizes that now the potential of his life has been inexorably fixed. He has done the decent, the moral, the correct thing and by placidly accepting his fate he suspects that eventually he will even be forced into the world of commerce in order to please Ernestina and her father. As the carriage rolls on he thinks briefly of the woman he has left behind him.

> Indeed it was hardly Sarah he thought of - she was merely the symbol around which had accreted all his lost possibilities, his extinct freedoms, his never-to-be-taken journeys. He had to say farewell to something; she was merely and conveniently both close and receding.
>
> There was no doubt. He was one of life's victims, one more ammonite caught in the vast movements of history, stranded now for eternity, a potential turned to fossil.[39]

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[39] Ibid., p. 262.

When he arrives at the White Lion Charles performs a quick toilet and then strides up the hill to Aunt Tranter's house where he finds his fiancée embroidering a watch pocket with his initials on it. He then presents her with an elegant Swiss brooch he has bought for her in London and afterwards they share a kiss.

> It was simple: one lived by irony and sentiment, one observed convention. What might have been was one more subject for detached and ironic observation; as was what might be. One surrendered, in other words; one learned to be what one was.[40]

At this point the author's voice suddenly intrudes on the narrative and despite the fact that approximately one hundred pages still remain in the novel Fowles unexpectedly concludes his story. What happens to Sarah one never knows, he says, except that she never bothered Charles again. Sam and Mary married, bred and died. Dr. Grogan lived to be ninety-one and Aunt Tranter was not far behind. Finally, when Mrs. Poulteney eventually passed on she was ignominiously sent to hell by St. Peter at Heaven's gate. Thus, the author has given the reader his first of three possible endings to The French Lieutenant's Woman. This one, obviously, is the traditional Victorian ending; the tidy comedy where rectitude triumphs and all remaining loose ends are conveniently tied up to the reader's satisfaction. As

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[40] Ibid., p. 264.

Fowles himself has already stated, freedom not authority is the first principle of this novel. Therefore, if the reader has simply been reading to see what will happen in a seemingly straight forward historical romance, he now has the answers and is clearly free to close the book. However, should the reader decide to turn the page he will be quickly reminded that this is, in reality, a modern, experimental novel and just as Charles refused to go straight back to Lyme from the undercliff in Chapter Twelve by stopping instead on his own initiative at the dairy, so Charles now rejects such a falsely placid ending to his life. For the protagonist is already aware that choice is a great advantage to human beings in the struggle to adapt, and he refuses to sink back into an undistinguished married life like that of some dying species. In the Darwinian framework of this novel he must evolve into something new.

> I said earlier that we are all poets, thought not many of us write poetry; and so are we all novelists, that is, we have a habit of writing fictional futures for ourselves, although perhaps today we incline more to put ourselves into a film...
>
> Charles was no exception; and the last few pages you have read are not what happened but what he spent the hours between London and Exeter imagining might happen...
>
> Above all he felt himself coming to the end of a story; and to an end he did not like. If you noticed in those last two chapters an abruptness, a lack of consonance, a betrayal of Charles's deeper potentiality ... then do not blame me; because all these feelings, or reflections of them, were very

> present in Charles's own mind. The book of his existence was coming to a distinctly shabby close.[41]

Therefore, when Sam actually does come forward to his master's compartment in Exeter station Charles has to pause for a moment to consider his situation. Even though he has officially decided in his own mind to go through with his wedding to Ernestina he also knows that he is still obsessed by Sarah and the three word note she sent him giving him her new address.

> Above all it seemed to set Charles a choice; and while one part of him hated having to choose, we come near the secret of his state on that journey west when we know that another part of him felt intolerably excited by the proximity of the moment of choice. He had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but what he felt was really a very clear case of the anxiety of freedom - that is, the realization that one is free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror.[42]

Finally he tells Sam that it looks like rain and so they had better spend the night at the Ship Hotel before going on to Lyme. Then Charles sets off on foot to walk to Endicott's Family Hotel while Sam proceeds to the Ship with their baggage. Sam, however, has already steamed open Sarah's three word note and so he knows where to go to spy when his chores are finished.

In the shabby lobby of Endicott's Family Hotel Charles asks to see Sarah in the sitting room, but the

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[41] Ibid., pp. 266-267.

[42] Ibid., p. 267.

proprietress informs him that Sarah has slipped on the stairs the day before and turned her ankle. Now she cannot walk and he must go to her room if he wishes to see her. Since one already knows that Sarah bought a bandage on her first day in Exeter[43] the reader is quickly reminded of Sarah's capacity for drama as Charles goes upstairs, opens her door and sees her sitting in the firelight with a bandaged foot on a stool, her hair loose, and wearing only a nightgown covered by a green shawl. As Charles tries to explain his presence he is suddenly overcome by a violent sexual desire and before he has time to think they are embracing each other and releasing all the energies which the whole Victorian age had worked to suppress.

> He sprang forward and caught her in his arms and embraced her. The shawl fell. No more than a layer of flannel lay between him and her nakedness. He strained that body into his, straining his mouth upon hers, with all the hunger of a long frustration — not merely sexual, for a whole ungovernable torrent of things banned, romance, adventure, sin, madness, animality, all these coursed wildly through him.[44]

Next he carries her to the bed and without meeting resistance from Sarah he consummates his passion. Immediately afterwards he is filled with horror. All his principles, his honour, his faith are razed. Yet, he continues to lie there

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[43]Ibid., p. 221.

[44]Ibid., p. 274.

in the sweetest possession of his life, feeling infinitely isolated. Only when his sense of guilt gradually overcomes him does he get up and go to the next room to dress. In this more brightly lit room the protagonist receives a tremendous shock for on his shirt tail is a red stain and he now realizes that he has just forced a virgin. Consequently Sarah could not have given herself to Varguennes. She has lied to him. Moreover, her life with Mrs. Poulteney has not been forced upon her by circumstances since the circumstances themselves have been invented. She too has become what she is simply by free choice.

When Sarah finally joins him in the sitting room she walks abruptly to the window and Charles notices that she does not have a limp. Sarah sees his speechless, accusing look and replies,

> "Yes. I have deceived you. But I shall not trouble you again" ... "You have given me the consolation of believing that in another world, another age, another life, I might have been your wife. You have given me the strength to go on living ... in the here and now." Less than ten feet lay between them; and yet it seemed like ten miles. "There is one thing in which I have not deceived you. I loved you ... I think from the moment I saw you. In that, you were never deceived. What duped you was my loneliness. A resentment, an envy, I don't know. I don't know." ... "Today I have thought of my own happiness. If we were to meet again I could think only of yours. There can be no happiness for you with me, Mr. Smithson."[45]

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[45]Ibid., pp. 278-279.

The resumption of such formality cuts Charles deeply. He opens his mouth to speak but then without warning he spins on his heel and leaves the room.

The third structural element of all Fowles's fiction is that each protagonist, having been separated from his normal existence, must turn inward to find the strength and determination needed to endure his ordeal and consequently undergo a spiritual reawakening. Now as Charles walks through pouring rain searching for oblivion and darkness to regain calm he comes upon a small red stone church and enters it. At first he tries to pray but soon he stops since he feels sure that his prayers are not heard and that no communication with God is possible for him. He gets to his feet again and with his hands behind his back he begins to pace up and down the aisle between the pews. He feels caught in a dilemma of indecision. He knows that he went to Sarah's room to prove that he was not caught in the prison of his future but he also knows that escape is not simply one act. Each hour it must be taken again and then, thinking to himself, he realizes his choice.

> You stay in prison, what your time calls duty, honor, self respect, and you are comfortably safe. Or you are free and crucified. Your only companions the stones, the thorns, the turning backs; the silence of cities, and their hate.[46]

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[46]Ibid., p. 284.

> He seemed as he stood there to see all his age, its tumultuous life, its iron certainties and rigid conventions, its repressed emotion and facetious humor, its cautious silence and incautious religion, its corrupt politics and immutable castes, as the great hidden enemy of all his deepest yearnings.[47]

Then, as Charles stands in the church thinking of his ancestors who would undoubtedly condemn him if he were to choose Sarah over Tina, he comes to an essentially existential conclusion.

> A whole dense congregation of others stood behind him. He turned and looked back into the nave.
>
> Silent, empty pews.
>
> And Charles thought: if they were truly dead, if there were no afterlife, what should I care of their view of me? They would not know, they could not judge.
>
> Then he made the great leap: They do not know, they cannot judge.[48]

And suddenly as he turns to leave the church the protagonist realizes that Sarah on his arm does stand for cruel but necessary freedom. Finally he knows how he feels and what he must do. He will break off his engagement with Tina and the world of bourgeois warmth and security which she represents for Sarah Woodruff and the radical alternatives to Victorian social custom which she presents. Once outside the church's door Charles finds himself shriven of established religion for the rest of his life.

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[47]Ibid., p. 285.

[48]Ibid.

He returns to The Ship and writes Sarah a letter asking her to give him time to return to Lyme and break off his engagement with Ernestina and as a symbol of his love he also encloses the elegant Swiss brooch he had bought for Tina in London. Then he makes his next fatal mistake by asking Sam to deliver it for him.

> He felt a great courage in himself, both present and future and a uniqueness, a having done something unparalleled. And he had his wish: he was off on a journey again, a journey made doubly delicious by its promised companion.[49]

When Charles arrives in Lyme the existential terror again invades him but since he has already sent the letter to Sarah it is too late for turning back. He goes to Ernestina immediately and tells her that he has decided he is not worthy of her. Finally, Tina faints as she tries vainly to win him back. Leaving Mary with her, Charles goes to get Dr. Grogan. Grogan roughly tells Charles that he will come to the White Lion and expect an explanation as soon as he has attended to Tina. While Charles sips brandy in his room waiting for the doctor Sam, who was at Aunt Tranter's when the engagement was irreversibly severed, arrives to tell Charles that he is no longer going to work for him. Finally Grogan angrily arrives as the protagonist is drafting a letter to Ernestina's father.

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[49]Ibid., p. 291.

> "Smithson, a gentleman remains a gentleman when he rejects advice. He does not do so when he tells lies."
> "I believed them necessary."
> "As you believed the satisfaction of your lust necessary."
> "I cannot accept that word."
> "You had better learn to. It is the one the world will attach to your conduct."
> Charles moved to the central table, and stood with one hand resting on it. "Grogan, would you have had me live a lifetime of pretence? Is our age not full enough as it is of mealy-mouthed hypocrisy, an adulation of all that is false in our natures? Would you have had me add to that?[50]

As the protagonist continues to defend his conduct that part of Dr. Grogan which had seen the world gradually overcomes the other Grogan who had spent the past twenty-five years living in Lyme Regis. Not only can the little Irishman not deny his liking for Charles but also he too secretly believes that Tina is a pretty but extremely shallow young girl. So, although his tone remains reproving, the doctor eventually gives Charles his sincere judgement of what happened before the protagonist begins his hasty return to Exeter.

> "But I beg you remember one thing, Smithson. All through human history the elect have made their cases for election. But time allows only one plea." The doctor replaced his glasses and turned on Charles. "It is this. That the elect, whatever the particular grounds they advance for their cause, have introduced a finer and fairer mortality into this dark world. If they fail that test, then they become no more than despots, sultans, mere

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[50]Ibid., p. 309.

> seekers after their own pleasure and power. In short, mere victims of 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 become a better and a more generous human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish ... you are doubly damned."[51]

When Charles finally returns to Exeter, he finds to his dismay that Sam never delivered his letter to Sarah. Instead, earlier this same day Sarah has taken the train to London without leaving a forwarding address. Charles gives the proprietress his card in case she should unexpectedly return and as he himself gloomily prepares to take the London train he vows that he will find her if he must search for the rest of his life.

As Charles sits in an empty compartment waiting for the train to start Fowles makes his first of two appearances into the fabric of his own novel. Wryly seeing himself in this instance as "a successful lay preacher - one of the bullying tabernacle kind"[52] the author walks to the far end of his protagonist's compartment and takes a seat. Once Charles has been lulled into a daydream by the even movement of the wheels Fowles raises his "massively bearded face"[53] and begins to stare at him in a peculiar way. Then he considers how best to end a novel in which the characters

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[51] Ibid., p. 311.

[52] Ibid., p. 316.

[53] Ibid., p. 315.

have been given the freedom to act as their inner beings dictate.

> Now the question I am asking as I stare at Charles is ... what the devil am I going to do with you? I have already thought of ending Charles's career here and now; of leaving him for eternity on his way to London. But the conventions of Victorian fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending; and I preached earlier of the freedom characters must be given. My problem is simple - what Charles wants is clear? It is indeed. But what [Sarah] wants is not so clear; and I am not at all sure where she is at the moment... Fiction usually pretends to conform to the reality: the writer puts the conflicting wants in the ring and then describes the fight - but in fact fixes the fight, letting that want he himself favors win...
>
> But the chief argument for fight-fixing is to show one's readers what one thinks of the world around one - whether one is a pessimist, an optimist, what you will. I have pretended to slip back to 1867; but of course that year is in reality a century past. It is futile to show optimism or pessimism, or anything else about it, because we know what has happened since.
>
> ... The only way I can take no part in the fight is to show two versions of it. That leaves me with only one problem: I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final the "real" version.[54]

So the author takes a coin from his pocket and flips it in the air. He looks to see which version chance has decided to show first, and then, noticing that Charles is now awake and looking at him, he puts away the coin as the train enters Paddington station.

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[54] Ibid., pp. 318-319.

Charles remains in London for some time hoping that Sarah will appear at his house. But, as months pass and neither his newspaper advertisements nor his private detectives are able to find her, he begins to lose all hope. After Mr. Serjeant Murphy, a top solicitor employed by Mr. Freeman, uses the letter Sam never delivered to force Charles to sign a document of confession which will keep him a bachelor for the rest of his life, the protagonist decides to go abroad; reluctantly wondering with his friend and lawyer, Harry Montague, if the truth about Sarah is that Grogan was right and that her motive was one of vindictive destruction - to ruin his prospects and reduce him to what he now is. For, one by one the Victorian institutions which have given support and meaning to Charles's life have disappeared. Through free choice he has rejected tradition, social convention and religion. In so doing he has lost his social position, his title, his fortune and his honor. Only his intellect remains. As he leaves Victorian England for the Continent and America he has clearly become, in existential terms, the lonely, estranged man of feeling and intelligence, alienated from himself and his society, heading out into the dark, impersonal, modern world.

At this point in the novel the narrative jumps twenty months into the future and the scene changes to the

new embarkment in Chelsea. Mary, who is now pregnant with Sam's second child, is idly walking along when a carriage stops nearby. To her amazement Sarah Woodruff jumps from the hansom, pays her fare and disappears into a nearby house. When Mary tells Sam about it that evening, he anonymously contacts Harry Montague and gives him her address. For Sam, who is now a successful advertising man in Mr. Freeman's store, still feels guilty both about never delivering Charles's letter to Sarah and about keeping the elegant Swiss brooch contained in it as a present for Mary.

As for Charles, one now learns that he has gradually come to terms with himself about his actions in the spring of 1867 during his past twenty months of incessant travelling. "Paleontology, now too emotionally connected with the events of that fatal spring, no longer interested him"[55] and despite his loneliness and gloom the protagonist has never entertained thoughts of suicide because he has remained certain that his destiny is still better than the one he rejected with Ernestina. Although he had not realized in the past how much his vision of freedom had depended on Sarah and the assumption of a shared exile,[56] there was still something in his isolation which he could always cling to and after reaching the United States his belief in

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[55] Ibid., p. 333.

[56] Ibid., p. 335.

freedom had gained renewed hope.

> What the experience of America, perhaps in particular the America of that time, had given him - or given him back - was a kind of faith in freedom; the determination he saw around him, however, unhappy its immediate consequences, to master a national destiny had a liberating rather than a depressing effect. He began to see the often risible provinciality of his hosts as a condition of their lack of hypocrisy. Even the only too abundant evidence of a restless dissatisfaction, a tendency to take the law into one's own hands - a process which always turns the judge into the executioner - in short, the endemic violence caused by a liberté-besotted constitution, found some justification in Charles's eyes. A spirit of anarchy was all over the South; and yet even that seemed to him preferable to the rigid iron rule of his own country.[57]

When the news finally reaches him in New Orleans that Sarah has been found Charles immediately books his passage on the next boat back to England; thus fulfilling the fourth structural element found in all Fowles's fiction which is that each protagonist invariably returns to his realistic home in order to reconcile his old self with his newly found romance perceptions.

Back in London Charles goes to the house in Chelsea and asks to see the Mrs. Roughwood who lives there. At first the protagonist supposes that Sarah must be a governess, but as he is shown upstairs to a waiting room he gradually guesses that this is the home of the painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti and that Sarah is now one of his models. He hears

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[57]Ibid., p. 341.

a sound, turns, and there before him is Sarah dressed in the new bohemian style and looking younger than ever. She is not grateful to see him and after a long, uncomfortable silence Charles asks her if she had not heard that he had broken his engagement to Miss Freeman. She answers that she had not. Next he tells her about his decision in the church and of Sam's gross betrayal while she remains staring out the window with her back to him. When she does not answer he bitterly continues by reminding her that she once told him that she loved him but now he supposes she has found new affections. Finally she replies that she has found new affections, although they are not of the kind he supposes, and that a madness was in her when they had known each other in Exeter. Charles asks if their love could not be redeemed and now that she is perilously close to tears he again asks if there is another.

> "There is another in the sense that you mean. He is ... an artist I have met here. He wishes to marry me. I admire him, I respect him both as man and as artist. But I shall never marry him. If I were forced this moment to choose between Mr. ... between him and yourself, you would not leave this house the unhappier. I beg you to believe that." She had come a little towards him, her eyes on his, at their most direct; and he had to believe her. He looked down again. "The rival you both share is myself. I do not wish to marry. I do not wish to marry because ... first, because of my past, which habituated me to loneliness. I had always thought that I hated it. I now live in a world where loneliness is most easy to avoid. And I have found that I treasure it. I do not want to share

> my life. I wish to be what I am, not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage.[58]

Finally, in desperation, Charles asks her if she has not even thought of him during his absence.

> She looked at him then; a look that was almost dry, as if she had foreseen this new line of attack, and almost welcomed it. She turned away after a moment, and stared at the roofs of the houses across the garden.
>
> "I thought much of you to begin with, I thought much of you some six months later, when I first saw one of the notices you had had put in—"
>
> "Then you did know!"
>
> But she went implacably on. "And which obliged me to change my lodgings and my name. I made inquiries. I knew then, but not before, that you had not married Miss Freeman."[59]

Thus the protagonist sees that Sarah has not changed. She has always lied to him during their meetings and she still continues to do so. Despite her seduction of him in Exeter the only certain truths about her are that she remains the destructive siren which she has always been and that she prefers her freedom to any confining relationship. Charles now begins to realize that her mystery has nothing to do with love but, like all battles, it is only "about territory and possession."[60]

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[58] Ibid., pp. 352-353.

[59] Ibid., p. 354.

[60] Ibid., p. 355.

At this point Fowles begins his second of three possible endings to the novel. Sarah next tells Charles that there is a lady in the house who knows her better than anyone in the world. She begs him to see her briefly and let her explain everything to him. Charles waits until the maid who had shown him up returns with a baby girl and then leaves them alone in the room. The baby starts to cry and, as with the whore's baby in the Haymarket, Charles pulls out his watch to divert the child's attention. Soon Sarah returns to the room and tells him that his child is called Lalage. All those cruel words she had just spoken had to be said, she tells him, and as they embrace Charles wonders if he will ever understand her parables. Thus Fowles has given the reader an ending which turns the novel into romantic comedy by using the ploy of a child to unite two alienated people. If one wishes to accept this ending, one certainly has the freedom to do so, but despite Fowles's earlier warning about the tyranny of the last chapter it seems clear that this ending is not really viable. For Sarah, as was mentioned, has not changed during Charles's absence and this ending contradicts Fowles's own stated intentions within the novel by denying both Sarah and Charles the power of choice to determine their own destinies for themselves.

As the novel's final chapter begins Fowles once again enters the fabric of his tale; this time seeing himself as a successful impressario who has trimmed "the once full, patriarchal beard of the railway compartment"[61] down to something rather foppish and Frenchified. Supporting himself on the parapet he looks towards Mr. Rossetti's house and gives one "the impression he can hardly contain his amusement."[62] Then he beckons peremptorily with his cane towards an open landau, gets aboard and the equipage draws briskly away before the story has been given its third and final ending. Fowles has, therefore, just thrown the existential terror of decision into the reader's face and now each reader must freely decide for himself if the last ending is more satisfactory than the two which have already been discussed.

The narrative now returns to the point where Sarah has told the protagonist that she does not wish to marry anyone and Charles has decided that her mystery is more concerned with territory and possession than love. In this last conclusion Charles continues by telling Sarah that he recalls a time when she told him he was her last resource; her only remaining hope in life. Then she puts her hand on

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[61] Ibid., p. 362.

[62] Ibid.

his arm and the protagonist is shocked to see the ghost of a smile in her eyes. Without words she offers him a platonic, and though perhaps more intimate, never consecrated friendship.

> But he no sooner saw that than he saw the reality of such an arrangement - how he would become the secret butt of this corrupt house, the starched soupirant, the pet donkey. He saw his own true superiority to her: which was not of birth or education, not of intelligence, not of sex, but of an ability to give that was also an inability to compromise. She could give only to possess...
>
> And he saw finally that she knew he would refuse. From the first she had manipulated him. She would do so to the end.[63]

Charles throws Sarah one last burning look of rejection and leaves the room.

> And at the gate ... found he did not know where to go. It is as if he found himself reborn, though with all his adult faculties and memories. But with the baby's helplessness - all to be recommenced, all to be learned again.[64]

* * *

> He walks towards an imminent, self given death? I think not; for he has at least found an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness, on which to build.[65]

Thus this final conclusion of The French Lieutenant's Woman ends not only with a new beginning but also with a triumph which is spiritual, self-contained and seen only in

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[63] Ibid., p. 364.

[64] Ibid., p. 365.

[65] Ibid., p. 366.

existential terms. Together these two results complete the six structural elements found in all Fowles's fiction. Charles has passed the test that Grogan gave him to determine if he should be forgiven - he is becoming a better and more generous person who wants to bring a finer and fairer morality into the world. The novel's final assertion is one of existential tragedy: man is alone in the Darwinian universe. Yet the reader's last glimpse of the protagonist is still precariously affirmative. Charles has gained a new faith in himself which allows him to stoically persevere and optimistically look towards the future.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE EBONY TOWER

John Fowles's fourth fictional publication, The Ebony Tower, first appeared in 1974. It consists of four short stories, a "Personal Note" from the author, and a new translation of a medieval lai or love story by Marie de France entitled Eliduc. This new volume once again demonstrated the ever increasing popularity of Fowles's work by immediately soaring to the top of the bestseller lists in both England and the United States. All four of these stories, as the author informs the reader at the beginning of his "Personal Note", are variations on certain themes and certain methods of narrative presentation which were used in his previous novels.[1] However, due to the obviously less ambitious scope and size of the fiction in this book, it is not surprising that three of the four stories fail to significantly develop the structural and thematic techniques contained in the one basic romance situation of The Magus, The Collector and The French Lieutenant's Woman.

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[1] John Fowles, The Ebony Tower, Little, Brown and Co. (Boston, Mass., 1974), p. 117. All further references to this book will be taken from this edition.

Consequently "Poor Koko", "The Enigma" and "The Cloud" will be of no use to the present study. Instead, it is only the novella length title story, The Ebony Tower (and the included Celtic romance of Eliduc which is "the source of its mood as also partly of its theme and setting")[2] that will be considered.

Any reader who is familiar with Fowles's early work quickly recognizes numerous parallels between The Ebony Tower and the author's long, troubled, first novel, The Magus. Both books center around a mystified, male protagonist who encounters a magically able older man living in an isolated, private domain with two beautiful female assistants. In each case the protagonist has left a wife or lover in the outside world but, as things progress, his duty towards this woman comes into conflict with his passionate desire for one of the new girls he has met. Also, as Fowles himself indirectly acknowledges in his "Personal Note", both these works clearly reflect a similar debt to Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes as the source for the mystical domains in which the central action of each takes place. Indeed, in his usual, shameless fashion Fowles makes the parallels between his two books unavoidable by having one of the girls in The Ebony Tower compulsively

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[2] Ibid., p. 117.

read The Magus whenever she finds a free moment. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, The Magus, in critical terms, was at best a limited success. Apart from the sheer annoyance of its pornographic overtones and its deliberate attempt to manipulate every conceivable "pop" element from the supernatural to the jargon-ridden scientific, it is generally agreed that the self-indulgent, overwritten middle section of the book which obsessively preserves enigma and creates an atmosphere of myth and mystery purely for its own sake is a major flaw in the novel which cannot be overlooked. Now, having finally established himself as an important author through the success of The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles uses The Ebony Tower to show how much more quickly and subtly he can develop essentially the same theme and structure which at the beginning of his career took thirteen years and six hundred pages to complete. For The Ebony Tower, unlike The Magus, has a tightly disciplined romanticism and is elegantly written. Although it is both richly sensuous and erotic it does not contain the slightest hint of pornography. Moreover, the apt, natural dialogue and masterfully created characters give the plot complete credibility at every turn. Beautifully paced and rich in nuance, the novella flows where the earlier novel had to force itself along. Nevertheless, The Ebony Tower is not simply a highly polished rewriting of an earlier work

since it differs from the author's first three novels in one important respect. Fowles has consistently presented all his protagonists (even Frederick Clegg on his own perverse level) with a sexually fulfilled, family relationship as the ultimate goal of their long and painful ordeals. But as soon as Nicholas Urfe and Charles Smithson successfully survive their respective tests and are finally prepared to attain this end, the author leaves them and finishes his novels. Now, in this fourth work, Fowles's latest protagonist is no longer in quest of this sort of relationship simply because he is already a loving husband and father. Therefore, through David Williams's solitary journey into Henry Breasley's Celtic domain at Coetminais, the author finally challenges his existential philosophy with the test of a happily married, family man attaining a radically new romance perception of what potential he still has for growth and change through free choice. Thus, The Ebony Tower brings the author full circle to the beginning of his literary career and the new conclusions which Fowles draws from it point away from his past work to his literary future.

As in the one fundamental romance situation of Fowles's three novels, the first structural element in The Ebony Tower is that the author begins his story with a precisely fixed location of time and place which gives the

reader the illusion of starting realistic fiction. David Williams, one immediately learns, has landed from England at Cherbourg, France and driven down to Avranches where he spent the night. The next day, in some splendid early September weather (eleven pages later it is pinpointed as 1973), he continues south into the forest of Paimpont, one of the last large remnants of wooded Brittany which in Medieval times attracted Chrétien de Troyes and the knights of the Arthurian cycle. Here, at the end of a deserted forest road and long chemin privé "islanded and sundrenched in its clearing among the sea of huge oaks and beeches,"[3] is a seventeenth century house, le Manoir de Coetminais. It is the satyr's lair of Henry Breasley, an old English expatriate and "enfant terrible" who has recently come to be regarded as one of the great masters of modern painting. The protagonist, unexpectedly without his wife Beth who has had to stay behind with their sick child, has been sent by a firm of English publishers to gather information for an introduction to a book of Breasley's paintings which he has been commissioned to write. As was briefly mentioned, the resemblance of Breasley's home to the setting and mood of the domain perdu in Le Grand Meaulnes is clearly intended. Fowles's own description of Alain-Fournier's novel proves the point.

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[3]Ibid., p. 4.

> Only last October I was traveling down a remote by-road in a part of France not very far from where Le Grand Meaulnes is set. We passed a dilapidated gateway. I made my wife, who was driving, stop and walk back with me. I said nothing. A rusty iron grille, one side ajar, through which we walked a few steps: a long drive, a dense avenue of ancient trees, and in the autumnal distance the facade of a seventeenth century manor-house. Silence, the gray, silent house and the dim trees. My wife murmured, "That book." She didn't have to say the title.[4]

The author's explicit modeling of Breasley's domain on Augustin Meaulnes's, combined with the novella's later association with the Celtic romance genre and Eliduc in particular, naturally and concisely lends a sense of tradition and archetypal significance to this story which it previously took Fowles many pages to create at Bourani in The Magus. On the book's surface level, though, it is obviously Breasley's "black bile for everything English and conventionally middleclass"[5] as well as his reputation as a great lover which gives Coetminais its full dimension of myth and legend.

As soon as David, unable to find a bell to announce his presence, enters Henry's home he is immediately confronted with the old man's infamously pagan and original way of life.

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[4]John Fowles, Afterword to Alain-Fournier, Le Grand Meaulnes, trans. by Lowell Bair, Signet Books (N.Y., N.Y., 1971), pp. 208-209.

[5]The Ebony Tower, p. 11.

> But he had to announce himself. He walked across the stone floor beside the staircase to the doorway on the far side of the room. A wide lawn stretched away ... in a close pool of heat, two naked girls lay side by side on the grass. The further, half hidden, was on her back, as if asleep. The nearer was on her stomach, chin propped on her hands, reading a book. She wore a wide-brimmed straw hat, its crown loosely sashed with some deep red material. Both bodies were very brown, uniformly brown, and apparently oblivious of the stranger in the shadowed doorway thirty yards away ... For a few brief seconds he registered the warm tones of the two indolent female figures, the catalpa-shade green and the grass green, the intense carmine of the hat-sash, the pink wall beyond with the ancient espalier fruit trees. Then he turned and went back to the main door, feeling more amused than embarrassed. He thought of Beth again: how she would have adored this being plunged straight into the legend ... the wicked old faun and his famous afternoons.[6]

Back at the front door the protagonist immediately sees the bronze handbell which, in his curiosity, he had previously missed. He rings and after a pause one of the girls, now dressed, enters the house and shows David to his room. She is called the Mouse and her greeting is so cool and sibylline that David feels he is an unwanted intruder. Indeed, he cannot recall being "less warmly received into a strange house".[7] Thus, due to Beth's last minute decision to stay at home, the protagonist has begun a solitary journey into a land of myth and legend far removed from the realm of ordinary social reality which completes the second

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[6]Ibid., p. 6.

[7]Ibid., p. 9.

structural element shared by all Fowles's novels. Yet, unlike in the author's earlier work, the protagonist's physical presence in this other world does not give him immediate access to it. David is still an outsider, alienated from and peripheral to the inhabitants of Coetminais. Before he is allowed to feel at home here he must undergo an ordeal.

Henry Breasley, as an artist who spent the majority of his life in Paris, evolved from the "black sarcasm" of his Spanish Civil War drawings through portrait painting, nudes and interiors. Since moving to Coetminais he has begun depicting what he refers to as "dreams" with a recurrence of forest motifs, enigmatic figures and confrontations from Celtic folklore. Outwardly inarticulate, offensive and indifferent to other opinions, this fiercely egocentric artist has spent a lifetime arguing that full abstraction in painting is meaningless and wrong. David Williams, on the other hand, is not only an art critic and lecturer who has "developed a manner carefully blended of honesty and tact"[8] since he is fond of being popular, but also a promising young abstract painter. Living an easy, co-operative marriage made uncontentious by his wife's success as an illustrator, David does work which is careful,

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[8]Ibid., p. 14.

bland and ingratiating. "To put it crudely, [his paintings] went well on walls that had to be lived with, which was one good reason (one he knew and accepted) that he sold."[9] Consequently David's ordeal begins that night at dinner when Henry gets drunk and personally attacks him for his artistic beliefs. With the Mouse acting as his interpreter, Henry rudely informs the protagonist that modern art is obscure because the artist is scared to be clear and therefore all non-representational, colour painting, like David's own work, represents a flight from human and social responsibility. David, who tries to strike a balance between defending his own artistic commitment and offending the "great man" he has come to see, asserts that this argument is passé since the twentieth century has room for everyone's views. Although their disagreement is not resolved when Henry loses consciousness and must be helped off to bed, David's firmness, tact, tolerance, and good sense successfully convince the older man that he is at least serious and sincere; thereby gaining himself respect, confidence and entry into Henry's domain. The most important thematic device which Fowles consistently uses in his work is the creation of one single image to develop the central motif in each book. In The Ebony Tower it is

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[9] Ibid., p. 15.

this image of fully abstract, non-representational art as a flight from human and social responsibility which will, as the novella develops, metaphorically emphasize why David Williams remains unable fully to participate in Henry Breasley's world.

The next morning Henry is contrite and after apologizing to David for his earlier behaviour he suggests that they and the two girls go into his forest for a picnic. Fowles's less important thematic device is that he consistently uses the specifically physical layout of each novel to help reveal its theme to the reader. Now that the protagonist has been accepted into the domain and all the characters are outside the house in the remains of the once endless Breton forest of medieval literature, the author stresses both the importance of Celtic romance to Henry's art and also the structural parallels between David Williams's existential journey into this land of myth and legend and Marie de France's medieval lai, Eliduc.

> The importance, pervasive in the mood if tenuous in the actual symbolism, of Breton medieval literature in the Coetminais series was generally accepted now, though David had not been able to trace much public clarification from Breasley himself on the real extent of the influence. He had read the subject up cursorily before coming, but, now he played a little ignorant; and discovered Breasley to be rather more learned and lettered than his briskly laconic manner at first sound suggested. The old man explained in his offhand way the sudden twelfth and thirteenth century mania for romantic legends, the mystery of island Britain ("sort of Wild

> Northern, what, knights for cowboys") filtering all over Europe via its French namesake; the sudden preoccupation with love and adventure and the magical, the importance of the once endless forest - of which the actual one they were walking in, Paimpont now, but the Brocéliande of the lais of Chrétien de Troyes, was an example - as the matrix for all these goings-on; the breaking-out of the closed formal garden of other medieval art, the extraordinary yearning symbolized in these wandering horsemen and lost damsels and dragons and wizards, Tristan and Merlin and Lancelot ...
>
> "All damn nonsense," said Breasley. "Just here and there, don't you know, David. What one needs. Suggestive. Stimulating, that's the word." Then he went off on Marie de France and Eliduc. "Damn good tale. Read it several times. What's that old Swiss bamboozler's name? Jung, yes? His sort of stuff. Archetypal and all that."
>
> Ahead, the two girls turned off on a diagonal and narrower ride, more shady. Breasley and David followed some forty yards behind. The old man waved his stick.
>
> "Those two gels now. Two gels in Eliduc."[10]

Eliduc is the story of a happily married man who leaves his wife at home and sets out on a journey to island Britain. There he falls in love with the daughter of a king and his duty towards his wife comes into conflict with his sexual passion for this new woman. He attempts, to use a modern idiom, "to have his cake and eat it too" by returning with this new girl to his home and wife. On the journey the king's daughter discovers that her knight is already married and she falls into a deathlike swoon. Naturally when Eliduc arrives home he cannot contain his

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[10] Ibid., pp. 54-55.

grief and soon his wife discovers why he is so unhappy. Soon afterwards she kills a weasel and, by chance, observes how its mate magically restores it to life. Not being one to stand in the way of her husband's happiness, she revives the king's daughter in the same manner and becomes a nun so that her husband and his new love may live happily ever after. The lai, obviously, is totally free of any existential angst or Kierkegaardian "either, or" and consequently the moral dilemma in it for Eliduc lacks all the intensity of our own modern era. Now, using the same skill which he developed to set the whole Victorian milieu against the twentieth century in The French Lieutenant's Woman, Fowles masterfully plays the medieval past against the modern world in The Ebony Tower. As David, Henry, and the two girls begin their dejeuner sur l'herbe by a quiet forest lake the protagonist is captivated by the forest's mythic, timeless quality and he begins to fall in love; not only with the Mouse but also with a whole way of life which has become obscured for him by work, marriage, family and the sterile intellectualism of his abstract painting.

> What had happened after the dinner had been, rather in the medieval context they had discussed on the walk, a kind of ordeal. Very evidently he had passed the test; which left him wondering how much, besides the direct advice, he owed to the Mouse. She must have told the old man a few home truths when he woke up; and perhaps reminded him that his reputation was at least temporarily a little in David's hands.

Meanwhile the girls had come out of the water, dried themselves, and lay side by side in the sun on the spit. The ordeal had indeed been like a reef; and now David was through, after the buffeting, to the calm inner lagoon. Another echo, this time of Gauguin; brown breasts and the garden of Eden. Strange, how Coet and its way of life seemed to compose itself so naturally into such moments, into the faintly mythic and timeless. The uncontemporary.[11]

* * *

It must have had something to do with their nakedness, the sun and water and low voices, the silent lostness of the lake behind; but he felt drawn on into a closer and closer mesh with these three unknown lives, as if he had known them much longer, or the lives he did know had somehow mysteriously faded and receded in the last twenty-four hours. Now was acutely itself; yesterday and tomorrow became the myths. There was a sense of privilege too; almost metaphysical, that he had been born into an environment and an age that permitted such swift process.[12]

* * *

He felt a little bewitched, possessed; and decided it must be mainly the effect of being without Beth. They lived so close, one had forgotten what the old male freedom was like; and perhaps it was most of all a matter of having to have some personal outlet for his feelings about the whole day. He had enjoyed it enormously, when he looked back. It had been so densely woven and yet simple; so crowded with new experience and at the same time primitive, atavistic, time-escaped.[13]

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[11] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[12] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[13] Ibid., p. 73.

Moreover, throughout the whole forest section of the novella Fowles has adroitly placed other images from the Arthurian past. The Breton forest has already been mentioned. The old king standing as an obstacle to true love is clearly Breasley, and, as the four characters are preparing to return to the manorhouse a last damsel is suddenly presented; casting David in his new role as the knight errant.

> The Mouse reached out and smacked her bottom lightly. Then she stood and walked down toward the water. A silence, the Freak lay on, staring at the grass. Finally she spoke in a lower voice.
>
> "Waste, isn't it?"
>
> "She seems to know what she's doing."
>
> She gave a dry little smile. "You're joking."
>
> He watched the Mouse wading into the water. Diana, slim-backed and small-rumped; something underfoot, she stepped sideways before going deeper.
>
> "You think you should leave?"
>
> "I'm only here because she is." She looked down. "In a funny sort of way Di's the odd one out. Old Henry and me, we kind of live from day to day. Know what I mean. We couldn't be innocent if we tried. Di's the other way around."
>
> The girl in the water plunged and began to swim away.
>
> "And she doesn't realize?"
>
> "Not really. She's stupid. The way clever girls are sometimes. Okay, she sees through old Henry. The person she can't see through is herself." The Freak was avoiding his eyes now; there was almost a shyness about her. "If you could try and get her to talk. Maybe this evening. We'll get Henry off to bed early. She needs someone from outside."
>
> "We'll of course ... I'll try."
>
> "Okay." She was silent a moment, then she pushed abruptly up and knelt back on her heels. A grin. "She likes you. She thinks your work's sensational. It was all an act. Yesterday afternoon."[14]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 71-72.

That night, as expected, Henry is "in a state of delayed hangover"[15] and very tired. Shortly after they finish eating the Mouse takes him up to bed, and while they are gone, the Freak again stresses the need for David to help her friend by telling him that Henry has proposed to the Mouse and she is seriously considering accepting. When the Mouse returns the three of them go to her room to see her paintings, and after a few minutes, the Freak leaves them alone and goes to bed. In private the Mouse herself confesses to David that Henry has asked her to marry him. She says she may do it both because she couldn't walk out on him now and also because she is scared to leave her "little forest womb."[16] As they continue talking David realizes that the Mouse's physical relationship with Henry must run deeply against the grain of her essentially innocent personality and that her main problem is really the repression of normal sexuality.

> There was another silence. She stared at her skirt. He watched her present metaphorical nakedness, and thought of the previous literal one; and knew that words were swiftly becoming unnecessary; were becoming, however frank or sympathetic, not what the situation asked.[17]

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[15] Ibid., p. 81.

[16] Ibid., p. 90.

[17] Ibid., p. 92.

But, in a sudden change of mood, the Mouse puts her paintings back in her portfolio and invites David to join her for a walk outside.

In the garden David's and the Mouse's emotions quickly and plausibly reach a critical stage. The protagonist looks at the girl beside him and knows that if he tries to make love to her she will not resist. Nevertheless, he retreats back into speech and tells her comfortingly that her knight errant will turn up one day. She pointedly replies that he will come for only two days and then leave again.

> Once more he had that uncanny sense of melted time and normal process; of an impulsion that was indeed spell-like and legendary. One kept finding oneself ahead of where one was; where one should have been.
>
> And he thought of Beth, probably in bed by now in Blackheath, in another world, asleep; of his certainty that there could not be another man beside her. His real fear was of losing that certainty. Childish: if he was unfaithful, then she could be. No logic. They didn't deny themselves the sole enjoyment of any other pleasure: a good meal, buying clothes, a visit to an exhibition. They were not even against sexual liberation in other people, in some of their friends; if they were against anything, it was having a general opinion on such matters, judging them morally. Fidelity was a matter of taste and theirs happened simply to conform to it; like certain habits over eating or shared views on curtain fabrics. What one happened to like to live on and with. So why make an exception of this? Why deny experience, his artistic soul's sake, why ignore the burden of the old man's entire life? Take what you can. And so little: a warmth, a clinging, a brief entry into another body. One small releasing act. And the

> terror of it, the enormity of destroying what one had so carefully built.[18]

Yet the Mouse continues to wait and by saying nothing implies that they can make love now with no strings attached if David wants. The protagonist takes her in his arms and gives her a long kiss, but he does not advance beyond their embrace and eventually she brings it to an end by "pulling her mouth abruptly away and turning her head against his neck."[19] Once inside the manorhouse, though, David changes his mind and pleads with her to let him take her to bed. But she now refuses because she knows their emotions are too deep for it to ever be without strings. They would not forget and it would only make things worse. Then she quickly goes to her room and locks the door.

> He wanted with all his being - now it was too late; was seared unendurably by something that did not exist, racked by an emotion as extinct as the dodo. Even as he stood there he knew it was far more than sexual experience, but a fragment of one that reversed all logic, process, that struck new suns, new evolutions, new universes out of nothingness. It was metaphysical: something far beyond the girl; an anguish, a being bereft of a freedom whose true nature he had only just seen.
>
> For the first time in his life he knew more than the fact of being; but the passion to exist.[20]

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[18] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

[19] Ibid., p. 98.

[20] Ibid., p. 102.

Thus David has failed both as Sir Lancelot and as Chaste Galahad. The virtues of tact, tolerance, firmness and good sense which allowed him to survive his first ordeal at dinner have now robbed him of both the girl and his personal hopes of becoming a great artist. As in his obscure, non-representational art, he was scared in the garden to be clear and spontaneous about his true emotions when an opportunity to do so presented itself. Instead of using freedom of choice to find new experience and inspiration through solitary risk at any cost like Henry Breasley, David freely decided not to take the chance of losing the safety, security and narrow self-protectiveness of his happily married bourgeois future. For the first time in his life he is fully aware of his own stiffness and limitations both as a man and as an artist. Having been separated from his normal, daily existence the protagonist has had to turn inward to find the strength needed to endure his ordeal. In so doing he has undergone a spiritual reawakening which completes the third structural element contained in Fowles's one basic romance situation.

> Coet had been a mirror, and the existence he was returning to sat mercilessly reflected and dissected in its surface ... and how shabby it now looked, how insipid and anodyne, how safe. Riskless, that was the essence of it ... One killed all risk, one refused all challenge, and so one became an artificial man. The old man's secret, not letting anything stand between self and expression; which wasn't a question of outward

> artistic aims, mere styles and techniques and themes. But how you did it; how wholly, how bravely you faced up to the constant recasting of yourself...
>
> Perhaps abstraction, the very word, gave the game away. You did not want how you lived to be reflected in your painting; or because it was so compromised, so settled-for-the-safe, you could only try to camouflage its hollow reality under craftsmanship and good taste. Geometry. Safety hid nothingness.[21]

The fourth structural element found in all Fowles's novels is that when each protagonist undergoes his spiritual reawakening he then returns to the real world to reconcile his old self with his newly found romance perceptions. The next morning when David awakens he learns that the Mouse has gone shopping and will not return until late that afternoon. Since he must be at Orly airport by then to pick up Beth he can do nothing except pack his bag, say goodbye to Henry and the Freak and begin his drive back to ordinary reality. Within three hundred yards after closing the gate on the private road to Coetminais he runs over something like a mouse, only bigger. He walks back to see what it is and discovers he has killed a weasel. "It was dead, crushed. Only the head had escaped. A tiny malevolent eye still stared up, and a trickle of blood, like a red flower, had spilt from the gaping mouth."[22] But, outside the gate

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[21] Ibid., pp. 108-110.

[22] Ibid., p. 107.

to Henry's domain there is no longer any similarity to the medieval world of Eliduc. No natural or supernatural magic can show David how to live life both ways at once now, and nothing except time can reduce the anguish and intensity of his existential choice in this modern age. He returns to the car and continues towards Paris and his rendezvous with his wife.

When they are finally reunited on the novella's final page this work, like Fowles's earlier fictions, once again ends with a new beginning; completing the fifth structural element of Fowles's one fundamental romance plot.

> She comes with the relentless face of the present tense; with a dry delight, small miracle that he is actually here. He composes his face with an equal certainty.
>
> She stops a few feet short of him.
>
> "Hi."
>
> She bites her lips.
>
> "I thought for one glastly moment."
>
> She pauses.
>
> "You were my husband."
>
> Rehearsed. He smiles.
>
> He kisses her mouth.
>
> They walk away together, talking about their children.
>
> He has a sense of retarded waking, as if in a post-operational state of consciousness some hours returned but not till now fully credited; a numbed sense of something beginning to slip inexorably away. A shadow of a face, hair streaked with gold, a closing door. I wanted you to. One knows one dreamed, yet cannot remember. The drowning cry, jackbooted day.
>
> She says, "And you, darling?"
>
> He surrenders to what is left: to abstraction.
>
> "I survived."[23]

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[23] Ibid., p. 114.

Yet, unlike the authoris three novels, The Ebony Tower does not end with a precariously affirmative last glimpse of the protagonist. David Williams has not attained the spiritual, self-contained existential triumph which characteristically ends Fowles's other work; nor has he gained a new faith in himself which will allow him to stoically persevere and optimistically look towards the future. Instead, David is acutely aware that his freedom and potential for significant change have been lost forever. In The Ebony Tower Fowles has returned to the beginning of his literary career to challenge his existentialism with the test of a happily married family man and has concluded that only a solitary individual who is constantly willing to undertake an existential recasting of the self can experience life to the full or create great art. This is certainly a highly romantic and somewhat questionable point of view since it oversimplifies the relationship between a man's life and his work. Nevertheless Fowles has stated his case strongly and confidently. Probably in a longer, more complex and ambitious future novel the author will be forced to qualify this existential vision.

CONCLUSION

In terms of literary craftsmanship The Magus is unquestionably John Fowles's least perfect fictional work. The overly opaque narrative and the excessive twists and turns in the plot, do, as the author himself admits, cause the book to "substantially remain a novel of adolescence."[1] Yet, like Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, which was the main source for this book, The Magus does continue to haunt most of its readers. The charm of the numerous sub-plots contained in Conchis's autobiography, and the tremendous energy and exuberance with which the whole story is told, do succeed in making it an unusual and unforgettable reading experience. Fowles's next work, The Collector, seems to suffer primarily from the author's overreaction to his own inability to fully control the technical aspects of his first novel. Although this second book is concise, well-proportioned and under far tighter technical control than The Magus, it is, by comparison, a relatively simple undertaking in which beautiful women are psychotically transformed into pinioned butterflies inside a madman's head. The novel is a touch superficial and

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[1] John Fowles, "The Magus Revisited," The Times Saturday Review, 28 May 1977, p. 7.

consequently it relies too heavily on sensationalism and sex. The author's third book, The French Lieutenant's Woman, finally succeeds in satisfying the often conflicting demands of both an academic and popular reading audience. This novel, for the first time, fully combines Fowles's spellbinding narrative and innovative presentation with a clearly intellectual endeavor. The French Lieutenant's Woman's artistry and drive do not prove that Fowles is a "great" artist, but nevertheless, its unanimous critical acclaim and overwhelming international sales do establish its author as an important writer in contemporary English literature. Finally, the novella length short story, The Ebony Tower, demonstrates a truly remarkable growth in the author's technical ability to control his work since the beginning of his literary career in 1963, and, like the three novels, it too confirms that Fowles is a serious, self-conscious writer who consistently strives in his fiction to perfect his vision of a new and vital romance literature. Also, the existential philosophy expressed in Fowles's work has remained equally sure of its direction and purpose throughout his career. The author's work continually stresses the primacy of personal choice and the need for each individual to freely control his own life, while each book persistently explores new variations of how this philosophical commitment may be most fully realized in real life.

Recently it has become possible to see where Fowles's literary career is going in the immediate future. In June of this year Jonathan Cape Ltd. issued a new, revised edition of The Magus in England which, at the moment, is not available in North America. Fowles's first return to The Magus in The Ebony Tower seems fully justified, as has already been discussed. This second return to his first novel, though, suggests that the author is dangerously close to pursuing his obsession with The Magus into an artistic cul de sac. Just last month, however, this fear was partially allayed when Fowles's North American publishers, Little, Brown and Company, announced the publication of a new, long Fowles novel, entitled Daniel Martin. This book will not be available in Canada until late November, but judging by the early American reviews, the author seems to be moving away from his one fundamental romance plot into new areas of fictional exploration. Since John Fowles is presently only fifty-one years of age it is certainly much too early to speculate on his ultimate place in late twentieth century English literature. Nevertheless it seems safe to assume that his future as a writer is full of great potential.

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