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UNIVERSITE BADJI MOKHTAR-ANNABA

*FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES*

كلية الآداب واللغات

*DEPARTMENT OF LETTERS AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE*

قسم الآداب و اللغة الإنجليزية

**Maturity from the 'Many' to the 'Few': The Search for the Existential Authentic Self in  
John Fowles' Early Fiction**

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**Candidate:**

CHEBEL Meriem

**Supervisor:**

Pr. BOUREGBI Salah

**Board of Examiners**

**Chairman:**

**Supervisor:** Prof. BOUREGBI Salah

Badji Mokhtar University - Annaba

**Examiner:**

**Examiner:**

**Examiner:**

This research is dedicated to my dear parents.

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## Abstract

This dissertation studies the existential journey taken by John Fowles's characters and himself in his early fiction, as well as Fowles's own conception of authenticity through the 'Many' and the 'Few'. Our choice in the writer's early fiction is not random; Fowles's first three novels focus on the thematic importance of existentialism. Fowles starts his journey by highlighting an importance of an epistemologically based work of art. However, the inclusion of the collection of short stories, which rather shifts the thematic attention from existentialism to the nature of fiction, is aimed to study the reasons for the shift. Fowles shows less inclination to creating existential quests in his *The Ebony Tower*. The reason is not clearly stated by him. The research's main undertaking lies in analyzing this shift.

The existential quest, including the author's representation of the Many and the Few, has been already examined by former critics, yet its relation to the artist's aesthetic integrity is yet to be focused on. The main question of the research is whether Fowles's discussion of the theme of existential authenticity affects his own authenticity as an artist or not. In other words, which characters make Fowles's art more authentic, the inauthentic Many or the authentic Few? Fowles's definition of an authentic artist is believed to be an artist that survives the 'nemo'. The latter is a concept that is very important to answer the main question of the research. The nemo is an unconscious state, in addition to the id, ego, and super ego, of 'nobodiness' that the individual self goes through. It is similar to Sartre's existential angst. The key to creating good art lies in defying the nemo. The latter should not be defied by imitation or 'making it new'. Both methods show a fear of extinction, for the main reason to defy the nemo is to survive time. The best method, according to Fowles, is to embrace that state by representing a timeless human condition in an aesthetically appealing medium. An authentic art is an art that balances an epistemological end with a consistent form. The major contradiction which defines Fowles's art is its categorization as postmodernistic.

Postmodernism aims for an ontological rather than an epistemological end, and its main method of defying the nemo lies in the continuing purpose of further ‘making it new’.

Our analysis of Fowles’s work shows that he creates existentially free, rather than authentic, characters. The product of that existential freedom is inconcrete. The main protagonists who go for an existential quest are mostly lost at the end after a heavily didactic guidance, which results in the absurd. It is Fowles’s inauthentic characters that restore the aesthetic balance to his art, for they are the most aesthetically free since they survive the author’s will to control through his obsession with the mission to teach. Didacticism is not the only failure in Fowles’s pursuit of embodying his vision of a good artist; his conception of the Many and the Few displays an elitist discourse that further distances the reader from relating to his promoted group of the existentially authentic. The reader, thus, develops an unexpected sympathy towards the less celebrated Many. These two aesthetic failures have been compensated by embracing the ontological rather than the epistemological in the thematic shift from existentialism to the nature of fiction. Fowles gives up on meaning and changes his principles in what defines good art. He is at his best when he subversively experiments. However, the timeless condition that Fowles unconsciously represents, and which unexpectedly defies the nemo, is the condition of the contemporary artist with the mission of surviving his ancestors’ heavy artistic heritage.

## Résumé

Cette thèse traite le voyage existentiel entrepris par John Fowles et les personnages dans ses premiers romans, ainsi que son propre concept de l'authenticité à travers «la plèbe» et «l'élite». Nous n'avons pas choisi au hasard les trois premiers romans de l'auteur : ces trois œuvres littéraires focalisent sur l'importance thématique de l'existentialisme. Fowles commence son voyage en mettant l'accent sur l'importance d'une œuvre d'art basée sur l'épistémologie. Cependant, l'inclusion de la collection de nouvelles, qui déplace plutôt l'attention thématique de l'existentialisme vers la nature de la fiction, vise à étudier les raisons de cette transformation. Fowles se montre moins intéressé à créer des quêtes existentielles dans *The Ebony Tower* et n'indique pas clairement la raison. L'effort principal de la recherche consiste à analyser cette transformation.

La quête existentielle, y compris la représentation de « la plèbe» et «l'élite» par l'auteur, a déjà été examinée par des critiques précédentes, cependant sa relation avec l'intégrité esthétique de l'artiste n'est pas encore mise en avant. La question principale de la recherche est de savoir si le débat de Fowles sur le thème de l'authenticité existentielle se reflète sur son authenticité en tant qu'artiste. C'est à dire, quels personnages rendent l'art de Fowles plus authentique, s'agit-il de l'inauthentique «plèbe» ou l'authentique «élite» ? Pour Fowles, l'artiste authentique est celui qui survit au « nemo». Le nemo est un concept très important pour répondre à la question principale de la recherche. Comme l'id, l'ego et le super-ego, le nemo est un état d'inconscience et de «la nullité» du soi-même. Cela ressemble à l'angoisse existentielle de Sartre. Pour créer du bon art, il est indispensable de vaincre le nemo qui ne doit pas être défié par l'imitation ou le «rendre nouveau». Ces deux méthodes montrent une peur de l'extinction, car la principale raison de défier le nemo est de survivre contre le temps. La meilleure façon, selon Fowles, consiste à adopter ce cas en représentant esthétiquement une condition humaine intemporelle. Un art authentique équilibre une fin épistémologique et une

forme cohérente. La principale contradiction qui caractérise l'art de Fowles est sa catégorisation comme postmoderne. Le postmodernisme vise une fin ontologique plutôt qu'épistémologique, et sa principale méthode pour défier le nemo réside dans l'objectif continu de «rendre nouveau».

Notre analyse des œuvres de Fowles montre qu'il crée des personnages existentiellement libres plutôt qu'authentiques. Le produit de cette liberté existentielle n'est pas concret. Les principaux protagonistes qui partent pour une quête existentielle sont pour la plupart du temps perdus à la fin. Le chemin didactique débouche souvent sur l'absurde. Ce sont les personnages inauthentiques de Fowles qui rétablissent l'équilibre esthétique de son art puisque ils sont les plus esthétiquement libres et survivent à son didactisme. Le didactisme n'est pas le seul échec dans la poursuite de Fowles pour incarner sa vision d'un bon artiste; sa conception de la plèbe et de l'élite reflète un discours élitiste qui éloigne davantage le lecteur de l'association avec son groupe promouvant l'authenticité existentielle. Le lecteur développe ainsi une sympathie inattendue envers les nombreux moins célèbres. Ces deux échecs esthétiques ont été compensés par une adoption ontologique plutôt qu'épistémologique dans le passage thématique de l'existentialisme à la nature de la fiction. Fowles renonce au sens et change ses principes dans ce qu'on appelle le bon art. Il se sent comblé lorsqu'il mène des expériences de manière subversive. Cependant, la condition intemporelle que Fowles représente inconsciemment, et qui défie de manière inattendue le nemo, est la condition de l'artiste contemporain avec la mission de survivre au grand héritage artistique de ses ancêtres.

## ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة الرحلة الوجودية التي يقوم بها جون فاولز و شخصياته في رواياته الأولى، بالإضافة إلى مفهوم فاولز الخاص عن الأصالة من خلال "الكثير" و "القليل". اختيارنا للروايات الأولى للكاتب ليس عشوائياً حيث تركز روايات فاولز الثلاث الأولى على الأهمية الموضوعية للوجودية. يبدأ فاولز رحلته بتسليط الضوء على أهمية العمل الفني القائم على المعرفة. ومع ذلك، فإن إدراج مجموعة القصص القصيرة، التي تحول الاهتمام الموضوعي من الوجودية إلى طبيعة الأدب القصصي، يهدف إلى دراسة أسباب هذا التحول. يتجنب فاولز إنشاء مهام وجودية في روايته *The Ebony Tower* و لم يذكر السبب بوضوح. تكمن المهمة الرئيسية لهذا البحث في تحليل هذا التحول. إن السعي الوجودي، بما في ذلك تمثيل المؤلف للكثير والقليل، قد تم فحصه بالفعل من قبل النقاد السابقين، ومع ذلك فإن علاقته بالتماسك الجمالي للفنان لم يتم التركيز عليها بعد. السؤال الرئيسي للبحث هو ما إذا كانت مناقشة فاولز لموضوع الأصالة الوجودية تؤثر على أصالته كفنان أم لا. بعبارة أخرى، ما هي الشخصيات التي تجعل فن فاولز أكثر أصالة، الكثير غير الأصيل أم القليل الأصيل؟ يُعتقد أن تعريف فاولز للفنان الأصيل على أنه الفنان الذي يتحدّى "نيمو"، حيث يعتبر النيمو مفهوم مهم جداً للإجابة على السؤال الرئيسي للبحث. يعرف النيمو على أنه حالة لاوعي، بالإضافة إلى الهوية والأنا و الأنا الأعلى، "للعدمية" التي تمر بها الذات، و هذا مشابه للقلق الوجودي لسارتر. يكمن مفتاح إنشاء فن جيد في تحدي النيمو. لا ينبغي أن يتحدّى هذا الأخير بالتقليد أو "بالتجديد". تظهر كلتا الطريقتين الخوف من الانقراض ، لأن السبب الرئيسي لتحدي النيمو هو البقاء على مر الزمن. أفضل طريقة، وفقاً لفاولز، هي تبني هذه الحالة من خلال تمثيل حالة بشرية خالدة في قالب مقبول من الناحية الجمالية. الفن الأصيل هو فن يوازن بين النهاية المعرفية والشكل المتناسق. التناقض الرئيسي الذي يميز فن فاولز هو تصنيفه على أنه ما بعد الحداثة. تهدف ما بعد الحداثة إلى النهاية الأنطولوجية بدلاً

من النهاية المعرفية، وتكمن طريقته الرئيسية في تحدي النمو في الهدف المستمر المتمثل في "التجديد".

يُظهر تحليلنا لعمل فاولز أنه يخلق شخصيات حرة وجوديا ولكن ليست أصيلة. ناتج تلك الحرية الوجودية غير ملموس. الأبطال الرئيسيون الذين يذهبون في مهمة بحث وجودي يضيعون في النهاية، و في الغالب، بعد توجيه تعليمي ثقيل، مما يؤدي إلى العبثية. إن شخصيات فاولز غير الأصيلة هي التي تعيد التوازن الجمالي إلى فنه ، لأنهم يتمتعون بحرية أكبر من الناحية الجمالية كما أنهم ينجوا من إرادة المؤلف في السيطرة من خلال هوسه بالنزعة التعليمية. لم تكن النزعة التعليمية الفشل الوحيد في سعي فاولز لتجسيد رؤيته للفنان الجيد ؛ فيعرض مفهومه للكثير والقليل خطاباً خبويًا يبعد القارئ عن الارتباط بمجموعته المروّجة لأصالة الوجودية. وبالتالي، يطور القارئ تعاطفًا غير متوقع تجاه المجموعة الغير مروج لها، وهي الكثير. تم تعويض هذا النقص الجمالي من خلال التبني الأنطولوجي بدلاً من التبني المعرفي في التحول الموضوعي من الوجودية إلى طبيعة الأدب القصصي. يتخلى فاولز عن المعرفة ويغير مبادئه فيما يعرف بالفن الجيد حيث يكون في أفضل حالاته عندما يقوم بالتجريب الهدام. ومع ذلك، فإن الحالة الخالدة التي يمثلها فاولز دون وعي، والتي تتحدى النمو بشكل غير متوقع، هي ما يجسده حالة الفنان المعاصر في مهمة البقاء و تحدي التراث الفني الغني لأسلافه.

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## List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used in the work's in-text citations. Further information has been provided in 'Works Cited'.

### 1. Works of Fiction by John Fowles

*C*     *The Collector*

*M*     *The Magus*

*FLW*   *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

*ET*    *The Ebony Tower*

### 2. Works of Nonfiction by John Fowles

*A*     *The Aristos*

*W*     *Wormholes*

## General Introduction

John Fowles is a British writer whose success is not exclusively academic; he is also a best-selling author. His first novel, *The Collector* (1963), was published when he was thirty-seven; he wrote other six works of fiction, among them, in addition to *The Collector*, the collection that is chosen for the purpose of this study: *The Magus* (1977), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), and *The Ebony Tower* (1974).<sup>1</sup> Fowles has also published many non-fictional essays that define his ideological inclination in his fictional work. The main non-fictional work that many academics focus on is *The Aristos* (1964), which is a collection of philosophical aphorisms that describe the main themes employed in his first four published fictions. Fowles's late interest in creative writing emerged after experimenting in poetry and philosophy, which were of higher preference to him, in his twenties. His failure in poetry is explained through Nicholas, in *The Magus*, yet his interest in philosophy, mainly French existentialism and socialism, reveals itself in his early fiction.

Fowles's works are noticeably different from the contemporary writers of his age. Through his philosophy and fiction, he criticizes the writings that glamorize the inarticulate anti-hero, or as Leslie Paul refers to as the 'angry young man', that is celebrated in the works of J. D. Salinger and Kingsley Amis. These writers are referred to as the Movement literary group; their aim is summed up in their rebellious and absurdist approach to life which their 'angry' protagonists share.<sup>2</sup> In addition to Fowles's rejection of the banality of purpose of the Movement writers, for he believes that good literature engages its readers through its ability to teach, another vital difference that can be easily construed between these writers and Fowles is the latter's tendency to experiment. Fowles describes further his mission as a writer in *Wormholes* (1998), which is a collection of essays that explains his philosophical and creative approach to reality and fiction and which will be significantly pointed to in our analysis of his fiction.

Fowles is among the first British writers who are categorized as postmodernist, although the basis for being a best seller does not lie in the favor of this particular categorization. The reason lies in his ideological interests, especially in his first published fictions, that run against the academic sophistication of postmodernism. Fowles claims to be an existentialist writer. The aim of his characters is to find their existential authenticity, which means that they seek meaning. Postmodernism promotes meaninglessness. In here lies the first contradiction that underlines all his first major works of fiction. That is why we have selected his early fiction for our analysis. His early fiction is characterized with an aesthetic tension that tries to approximate the genre to realism, which is Fowles's ideal genre. This tension results in the didactic use of his celebrated theories about moral education and growth.

Another reason for our choice for his first four fictions is his pronounced use of existentialism as a theme. Fowles's 'obsession' with existentialism stems from an obsession to define his place in the world. He tells Daniel Halpern that "[a]ll my books are about [freedom]. The question is, is there free-will? Can we choose freely? Can we act freely" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 25). An epistemologically based work of art is of a prior importance to Fowles at the start of his journey as a writer. However, he shifts this importance to studying the nature of fiction and the creative power in his collection of short stories, which we have also chosen to study in this research. His collection of short stories belongs to his early fiction, yet it marks a new artistic persona that Fowles's late fiction celebrates. This persona is embedded in Fowles's relinquished desire to approximate his fiction to realism by embracing his postmodern persona. Since our main concern, as the title of our research indicates, lies in studying existential authenticity, Fowles's early fiction is the most appropriate target for the research's purpose. Nevertheless, the purpose of the research exceeds this target to draw on a more specific study, which lies in Fowles's journey towards

his authentic self. Including the collection of short stories is, thus, part of studying the writer's two artistic personae, for one of them might be limiting to his creative freedom.

The contradiction we have mentioned above, together with the journey of the author towards his authentic self, has been neglected by criticism. Also, although 'existential authenticity', the 'Few', and the 'Many' have been referred to by many major researchers, among them James Acheson, Katherine Tarbox, and Simone Loveday, they have been dealt with separately and not in relation to one another. Our aim is to find the common ground between Fowles's conception of authenticity, which lies in his Few, and its relation, if there is any, to Sartre's existential authenticity. The Many is the inauthentic crowd that all existential philosophers preach against. In Sartre's words, the Many encompasses the existentially inauthentic.

In our research, and in relation to the answer of the main contradiction in Fowles's artistic personae, we are to also highlight which concept is more artistically practical and aesthetically appealing. This particular method has also been neglected by criticism. Critics have focused in their analysis on authentic and inauthentic characters and their journeys, yet we are adding a third journey in relation to the above, which is that of their creator. Since the thematic focus requires a coherence of aesthetics, the success of the characters' quest for the authentic has to guarantee a success of their creator; thus, which of the characters' journeys make the author's work more authentic? Do Fowles's members of the Few or his members of the Many make of him an authentic artist? In here lies our major contribution and the second contradiction that underlies Fowles's works. Character freedom, which is of an aesthetic importance, corresponds to less interference from the author, yet Fowles dictates certain existential codes through his members of the Few to guarantee a concrete definition of authenticity, which might endanger that freedom; it is the aesthetic freedom, and not the

existential one, of Fowles's characters that is of a greater significance to his journey. Whether this assumption is true or not, the study will have to add a resolute answer to this hypothesis.

Important former contributions regarding Fowles's theme and form agreement and his creative role lie mainly in two works of criticism, although even these contributions do not target the journey of the authenticity of the author in relation to his characters' thematic and aesthetic freedoms and its relevance to their journeys towards authenticity. Simone Loveday, in his *The Romances of John Fowles*, deals mainly with the consistency of Fowles's major themes, which consist of the Many, the Few, freedom, the domaine, and the relation of the masculine to the feminine, with their representative form. He finds in romance the most appropriate genre to read these themes. The reason for Loveday's categorization lies in an attempt to redeem Fowles of the controversial ideas that his themes produce. Fowles has been accused of being an elitist; his division of society into a superior intellectual group and an inferior class of uneducated mass has created an unsympathetic response of criticism that almost equals the response he has received over his representation of women as mysterious others whose purpose is to generate sexual and creative energies that are purely masculine. Since romance is unapologetic for such extreme ideology, Loveday believes that Fowles is best read as a romancer (10), which means that the parody of the genre which Fowles implements is not efficient enough to categorize him otherwise. The parody, according to Loveday, does not allow the label to change, making Fowles's approach to romance 'new' rather than parodied. This means that Fowles rewrites the genre.

There are three main gaps with this reading. The first is that Loveday mentions parody, yet he does not see that the parody Fowles implements can change the theme and form agreement, which makes the resulted genre, which is a parody of romance, unapologetic for the implied extreme sexual and social discourses that Fowles promotes. The second gap is that Fowles does not mention the reasons of the use of postmodern parody to deconstruct the

genre. Although Fowles's admiration of realism creates a tension that approximates the genre to the real, as Loveday asserts, other reasons should be probed, among them approximating the text to postmodernism. The third gap is Loveday's avoidance of Fowles's definition of good art in his analysis of his fiction. Loveday refers mainly to Fowles's theory when he deals with the main themes of his fiction, yet his focus on the form seeks mainly to align these themes with the form.

The second work of criticism that targets Fowles's use of creative power and studying different types of freedoms in relation to that power is Pamela Cooper's *The Fictions of John Fowles: Power, Creativity, Femininity*. Cooper's work is less redemptive than Loveday's. Her main focus lies mainly in Fowles's use of the feminine to empower the masculine creativity, for she condemns the representation of female artists in his works. According to Cooper, Fowles rather celebrates his male artists and sees in their work a superior artistic representation. Female characters in Fowles's works provide what is referred to as 'object d'art' for his powerful, and, most probably, symbolic male surrogates. Another important issue she studies is Fowles's implication of the fictional self-consciousness and its relation to the different freedoms, mainly the aesthetic ones, of characters and readers. Creative power is a theme as well as a formal tool which is tackled with significant details by Cooper and which marks an important departure for our main problematic of the research. However, Cooper's work also lacks relating the characters' search for authenticity to their own aesthetic freedom from the author; in addition, the critic does not consider Fowles's conception of good art in her analysis of his own creative power and does not judge the outcome of that power the way our research aims to do. Another gap which Cooper's work neglects to fill is the other postmodern formal tools, in addition to the fictional self-consciousness, which Fowles imply to subvert and deconstruct his way towards creating authentic art.

To answer the questions of the research, we are to add another theoretical dimension in addition to the philosophical one. This dimension is defining ‘authentic art’. Our approach is, thus, eclectic, encompassing the philosophical and modern and postmodern aesthetics. The research covers four chapters that target specific aims which gradually answer its objective. Each chapter includes three sections.

The main aim of the first chapter, entitled “Conceptualizing the Existential Authentic Self and Authentic Art: The Theoretical Background to the ‘Many’, the ‘Few’, and the ‘Nemo’”, is to introduce the main concepts of our research. These concepts are to be studied outside their implementation in Fowles’s fiction. The theoretical background to Existential authenticity, the Many, the Few, and authentic art are important to answering the main question that later chapters further materialize. That is the reason why the first chapter offers a close reading to important theories to the research’s aim. Our critical contribution lies mainly in the last section of the chapter, which analyzes modernism and postmodernism in relation to Fowles’s definition of good art. Former criticism has not included this investigation, which we find vital to studying Fowles’s fictions and judging its authenticity. The word authenticity is to be defined in the two first sections. The first section focuses on studying the philosophical background to existential authenticity which is in itself a background to Fowles’s the Many and the Few. It also answers the issue of the practicality of the concept, which means its use in real life outside its philosophical abstraction. An in-depth analysis of Søren Kierkegaard’s, together with Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus’s, conception of existential authenticity is to be provided in this section. Since Fowles’s interest in French philosophy is the reason for his embrace of existentialism, a semi-comparative study of Sartre and Camus’s conception of existentialism is emphatic. The reason for the emphasis does not lie in Fowles’s attention to their philosophy only; Camus’s success as an artist might be the product of the practicability of the implication of his conception of authenticity in

comparison to that of Sartre's. This hypothesis is to be proved or disproved in the first section. The second section analyzes Fowles's conception of existential authenticity through his notions, the Many and the Few. Other important concepts, like the 'nemo' and the 'aristos', which are of great importance to the research, are also closely scrutinized. The reason for the importance of these concepts, especially the nemo, is their relevance to the definition of good art according to Fowles. We have already mentioned that our main contribution lies in the journey of the artist, Fowles's in particular, towards creating authentic art. The second section, together with the third one, defines good art. While the second is based on Fowles's theory regarding that definition, the third applies the conception on two literary movements that are successive and interrelated in principle. Modernist and postmodernist literatures are the development of Ezra Pound's celebrated statement that defines good art, which is 'make it new'. The reason for analyzing these two movements in particular in the last section is relevant to the nature of Pound's statement. 'Make it new' stems from the nihilistic and existential readiness to break up with traditions of representation. Another reason lies in Fowles's art and its relation to an age where postmodernism was at the start of its emergence. Through our analysis, we get to deduce where to place Fowles as an artist and how to judge his art.

The other three chapters of the work are analytical in the sense that they deal with Fowles's novels and his collection of short stories to answer the main problematic of the research.

The second chapter, entitled "The Many, the Potential Few, and the Potential Feminist", studies Fowles's definition of inauthenticity through a variety of characters in his fiction; the chapter also examines the writer's representation of female characters and his claim of being a feminist. The first section of the chapter focuses on the category of people Fowles labels as the Many. This group of people is supposed to be inferior to the celebrated

Few. In *The Aristos*, Fowles preaches against this condemned social group of unintelligent, uneducated, and conformist group. The concept is familiar, for it is reminiscent of Nietzsche's the 'herd', yet Fowles speaks of a possibility of educating the Many out of their ways. The first section studies if what constitutes the Many is open to this possibility or not. That is: are the characteristics of the Many, or what we have conceptualized as the 'inauthenticity of the common man', mentioned above corrigible or not? Fowles believes that the Many is just the prevailing social group; he also sees that the Many and the Few, which is supposed to be the group of the most authentic, reside within the individual self and that every person possesses both. This suggests that before becoming members of the Few, even the intellectually superior individual is trapped in a wrong conception of his true self. In the second section, we study that wrong conception; that is what makes the potential Few inauthentic. While the first analyzes the inauthenticity of the Many, the second focuses on defining what inauthenticity means in a less mature member of the Few. We are to also compare both types of inauthenticity and which is rather existential and whether Fowles forms a different definition to the concept or not. Thus, the chapter does not offer a definition of the existentially authentic on a practical ground; it offers an answer to what an individual should not be instead of what an individual should be. We find that inquiry equally important to what an individual should be since opposites offer definitions by negation. The second section also answers the question of the difference between the Many and the potential Few; since both are at a stage of being existentially inauthentic, what is it that makes the potential Few superior?

Another important investigation in the second chapter is Fowles's representation of women in his fiction. Fowles's male protagonists are artists or to-be-artists and their success or failure is linked to their relation to the main female muse. According to him, the masculine is inferior to the feminine in that the former is rational and rigid and the latter is creative and progressive. Men, especially male artists, need the feminine ingredient to create authentic art.

The feminine rids men of their coarse masculinity and allows them to step out of the conservatism which their moral values dictate. The feminine is contrasted to the moral and thus it allows all that is free, feeling, passionate, and mysterious. It generates a creative power that men would not have experienced if it were not for the teaching of a woman. This is what Fowles believes, yet what his fiction allows to present is different. One contradiction that draws attention to itself in his conception of the feminine is the absence of the female artist in his fiction. The last section studies the freedom of his female characters and whether Fowles's claim of being a feminist should be taken for granted. We have already mentioned that Cooper's study tackles this point in detail; our contribution lies in judging Fowles's, for he is a male artist, embrace of the feminine, which is the first authenticating element, in his art. That is: does Fowles embrace his anima, which is responsible for liberating him as an artist, or not? This is the very first step to decide on Fowles's own authenticity as an artist according to his definition.

The third chapter, entitled "Freedom towards the Few: Fowlesian Ideas of Power", presents the core for our research. It is through our analysis of the existentially authentic individuals, whom Fowles calls the Few, that we can concretely define the two notions and evaluate Fowles's aesthetic competence with regard to their representations. In other words, we will analyze the key concepts of the research, encompassed in existential authenticity and the Few, in relation to Fowles's definition of an authentic artist.

Before this major discussion, which answers the main problematic of the research, an important facet, which lies in the variously divertive means towards existential freedom, should be highlighted, for it is of a great thematic and aesthetic significance. The different means towards existential freedom are the major concern of the first section. In order to reach existential freedom, Fowles believes that his initiates have to accept the guidance of 'hazard' rather than the conventional controlling god. According to Fowles, hazard, which is another

concept for chance, is categorical to achieve absolute freedom. Although the concept seems rather less restricting than the notion of an omnipotent god, it is nevertheless limiting in comparison to the notion of absolute freedom that existentialists preach. Thus, the question that comes to one's mind here is: how is it possible that hazard should promote freedom rather than restrict it? What further stresses this contradiction is hazard's relation to the second means towards existential freedom: evolution. Fowles uses his third published novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, to experiment with hazard and evolution as primary means to achieve existential freedom. Since the latter seems unlikely as a means to generate freedom, for evolution has always been thought of as contradictory to the doctrines of existentialism, finding a reconciling intersection between the two rival ideologies is to put Fowles on a higher scale of originality. No author has tackled this intersection before, and if Fowles guarantees a thematic and aesthetic balance in his discussion of this intersection, the result should be aesthetically uplifting. The last means towards existential freedom is the 'domaine', which is a concept that is equivalent to Alain-Fournier's magical land of the lost domain. Actually, Fowles's most influential model of fiction is Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* which is highly alluded to in his works, especially *The Magus*, as we will focus on with details in the first section. It is hazard that, again, places Fowles's initiates in this fantastic and distant space which is responsible for shocking their sense of familiarity and which teaches them about the importance of freedom. The island they move to contrasts highly with the everyday urban world of the modern society. The question to be asked is: if the domaine offers freedom, then why do these initiates have to eventually leave it?

The second section's findings answer part of the research question, which is a concrete definition of existential authenticity. While the second chapter focuses on the inauthenticity of the Many and the potential Few, this section explores the potential Few's stage of initiation into an existential quest, which usually takes place in the domaine, and their development

towards full membership of the Few, which Fowles refers to as the aristos. This member takes on a mission that follows the same pattern in all Fowles's early fiction. He is to meet a mentor and a female prototype of the *princesse lointaine* who embodies the mystery of the feminine that is supposed to allow the creative self to mature. The section also analyzes the mature members of the Few personified in Fowles's mentors. Every work of fiction, with the exception of some of the short stories of *The Ebony Tower*, celebrates a god-like figure who presents the initiate with the right knowledge to become existentially authentic. These figures are almost as tyrannical as Sartre's least romanticized omnipotent God, which is quite problematic to Fowles's glamorization of them. That poses two problems that are to be further explored. The first is whether we should trust the credibility of that knowledge altogether, and the second is the possible aesthetic failure that might stem from the writer's urge to speak through these mentors. The latter is to be focused on in the last section of the same chapter.

The last section, entitled "Fowlesian Ideas of Power Going Wrong: Didacticism versus Character Freedom", projects the Fowlesian conception of the authentic on his characters' aesthetic freedom. This section answers the main problematic of the research, which concerns the authenticity of the author rather than his characters. Authorial authenticity has always promoted character freedom in the sense that the author must free his characters from his control. Didacticism runs against Fowles's conception of good art. A good artist should create free characters that have the ability to communicate with every reader from every time and space. The timelessness of a work of art refuses to be bias or didactic. Fowles has been accused of creating an elitist discourse through dividing society into the unreconciled groups of the Many and the Few; the focus of his discussion of the authentic does not encompass his views on one individual only, but rather on a social group which looks down upon the innocently uneducated and divides society further. This conception is also to be studied

closely in order to detect what goes wrong, thematically as well as aesthetically speaking, in Fowles's strongest ideas.

The final chapter, entitled "Authenticating the Novel and Embracing Postmodern Ontology", studies Fowles's structural approach and the interrelations of his philosophical assumptions with its representational aesthetics. The latter proves to have a controversial relation with the former, for the aesthetic outcome is postmodernistic, which runs against Fowles's definition of good art. It also runs against the mission to find meaning and to teach. This would create a possible incoherence of form and theme that would frustrate Fowles's creative journey. Since the thematic emphasis is to be studied in former chapters, the last focuses on the form of the novels and the patterns implemented by Fowles to decide on the synchronization of theme and form.

The philosophical mission Fowles has taken, whether it is successful or not as we will discover through this research, has created a recurrent pattern in his fiction which the first section studies. This pattern defines a certain literary genre that has promoted his novels' popularity amongst non-academic readers and raised controversy in the academic circle. It is a revised version of romance. Fowles's romance heroes follow the quest mission which focuses on the protagonist's psychological and moral development in a certain fantastic place that interrupts his former mundane and inauthentic lifestyle. The hero is mostly a male protagonist, except for the first novel, who has to go through an adventure in an enclosed Eden-like setting (the domaine) and meet a *princesse lointaine* that would help him find the best artist and person in him.

On the surface, the structure of romance is harmonious with the existential quest that Fowles's main characters take; however, it is not always the case. Since the genre has a specific and rigid pattern that is quite unappealing to Fowles's own literary taste, who sees in realism a superior genre, Fowles adheres to the modernist and postmodernist aphorism of

breaking up with traditions of representation and adopting postmodern parody. The result is problematic, since it runs against Fowles's principles as a novelist.<sup>3</sup> A great artist to Fowles is one who resembles a great existentialist, someone who is able to be free and create his own meaning in the world, yet he is able to free his characters. In *The Aristos*, he stresses the importance of both: finding freedom and meaning. These two principles cannot fit in the postmodern agenda since postmodernism opts for a meaningless world whose characters are absurdist rather than existentialist. This poses the main problematic which the first section answers; why does Fowles imitate and subvert romance through parody instead of adopting realism?

The second and third sections study other forms of parody implemented in narrative unreliability, metafiction, the use of open and multiple endings, and intertextuality. The explicit reason for using these devices is to free his readers. The aim of modernistic parody is still to seek meaning; however, postmodern parody, which is mostly referred to as pastiche, aims at drawing the reader's attention to the fictionality of the created world. This attention devalues the role of the author and announces his 'death'; alternatively, freedom lies within the reader's, and the characters', reach. Even if postmodernism contradicts Fowles's artistic principles, the freedom of the characters and reader is always welcomed. The reader, especially, becomes an active part of the fictional world Fowles creates.

This approach is not without its challenges and contradictions. Fowles uses metafiction to investigate on the source of the creative power. Through his mentors and their works of art, he shifts the thematic concern from existentialism to the nature of fiction and questions of representation. This shift is more emphatic in his late fiction, yet it starts in *The Magus* when he centers his main story of Nicholas on another, which is that of Conchis, his mentor. His mentors serve as gods in his fiction, and so this reinforces their creative power over the worlds they create; in other words, his mentors' absolute controlling power is symbolic of his own.

Fowles's implicit interest, thus, might lie in surveying and upgrading the power of creativity where the artist's freedom and power is limitless. Fowles's use of intertextuality also pretends to have the same explicit reason of freeing his characters and readers. Nevertheless, the plurality of meaning which it produces, for it aims at re-writing and re-reading different literary genres and allusions, seeks to empower only the writer.

These problems of aesthetic representation and philosophy, which are the main focus of the last two chapters, come to pose a great contradiction in Fowles's work, but they are not new to writers of fiction. However, criticism has a favor for the aesthetic over philosophical didacticism. Our main concern is studying the works of Fowles and analyzing his techniques to survive as an aesthete and as an authentic individual-writer. Our research findings would intend to fulfill this aim.

## Notes

1. The order that has been listed is chronological; *The Magus* was first published in 1965, yet a revised version appeared in 1977.
2. The Movement is originated in poetry, yet the principles of its skepticism and its aesthetic purposes have extended to works of fiction. The ‘angry young man’ is mainly, and most successfully, promoted through J. D. Salinger’s Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951).
3. In many interviews, Fowles admits that he is against postmodernism and that he prefers to be a realist since the last means freeing his characters from his control. We will be able to analyze Fowles’s character freedom in the last section of the third chapter.

## **Chapter One:**

Conceptualizing the Existential Authentic Self and  
Authentic Art: The Theoretical Background to the  
'Many', the 'Few', and the 'Nemo'

## Introduction

This chapter's aim is to analyze the main key concepts in our research which are crucial to its purpose of analyzing the authentic mission of Fowles as an artist and his characters. The first section aims at studying the origins of existential authenticity as an ideological background to Fowles' the 'Many' and the 'Few' since Fowles' non-fictional work, together with his fictional work, is inspired by Sartre's existential thought. It also gives an answer to the possibility of the practicality of the concept. To put it in other words, and in a form of a question, is it feasible to be 'authentic' or is it just an abstract concept that cannot be realized by the individual self in life?

The second section examines Fowles' non-fictional work, *The Aristos*, and his own conception of authenticity. We will focus more on the journey from the 'Many' to the 'Few' taken by the individual seeking authenticity and how Fowles views its success or failure. There are other important concepts in this section, which are important to the existential journey, which are the 'nemo' and the 'aristos'. Fowles also sheds light on the defining aspects of authentic and good art, which will help us evaluate his work in the coming chapters.

The last section answers the question: does 'make it new' in fiction necessarily mean creating something authentic? In this section, we will focus on modernism and postmodernism, as both movements stem from the nihilistic order of breaking-up with traditions and 'make it new', and see if they convey what Fowles think of as authentic art. The aim here is to have a more practical ground (as the former section is mostly theoretical, for we will analyze some of the works of both periods and their techniques) to facilitate the evaluation of Fowles' work of fiction in the last chapter according to his conception of good and authentic art.

### 1.1. The Ideological Background to John Fowles' the 'Many' and the 'Few': Existential Authenticity and its Origins

Sartrean existentialism and Heraclitus' socialism are of a strong relevance to Fowles' conception of the 'Few' and the 'Many' in that they are the basis for their foundation, however different they are in principle, which does not come as a surprise, for Fowles' philosophical work, *The Aristos*, is a personal attempt at freeing all restrictions of thought. Nevertheless, this freedom is also the main reason behind the selective choice of these ideologies. This makes our investigation into their principles vital, for Fowles does not only imply them in his theory only, but also in his novels.

The most celebrated theory in *The Aristos* is Sartre's existentialism. In fact, *The Aristos* is, according to its writer, a product of existential authenticity: "To most people it is a pleasure to conform and a pleasure to belong; existentialism is conspicuously unsuited to political or social subversion, since it is incapable of organized dogmatic resistance or formulations of resistance; one personal expression of view; such as this book" (*The Aristos* 123). An emphatic analysis of Fowles' philosophical work to investigate the validity of his claim (*The Aristos* as a product of existential authenticity) will be dealt with in the next section, along with references to Heraclitus' influence. As a first, and hopefully a sound, step for such an analysis is understanding existential authenticity itself to understand to what extent Fowles' *The Aristos* is authentic and, more importantly, to understand to what extent Fowles' works of fiction and his characters are authentic; that is it is the main first step to answer the problematic of the research.

Existentialism is a prevalent philosophy in the art of fiction. The reason lies behind it being a philosophy of the individual rather than that of the universal. All what is artistic is individual, especially according to artists of the modern era. Freedom of expression defines good art, that if there is anything that can define it or restrict it to a definite label, and thus

what better philosophy can be chosen than a philosophy that abhors definition and categorization.

The first to label the philosophy as existential is the French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre. However, existentialism is originated in the works of Søren Kierkegaard, which have inspired great thinkers of the modern age, such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. The latter's concepts of 'being' and 'thrownness' highly has influenced the formation of Sartrean existential authenticity. Thus, before dealing with Sartre's existential theory, we need to go through the development of existential thought through history moving from the father of existentialism, Kierkegaard, to Nietzsche and Heidegger. Our interest in such a chronological examination has many reasons. First, in dealing with this line of thought, we can see to what extent Sartre's theory is authentic, or let's use original since the concept 'authentic' is an end in itself in this study. Second, the observation would lead us to see which theory is more practical, or whether they are practical in the first place, since every philosophy has its obstacles in the practical field of life. Last, every philosopher offers a definition of existential authenticity; thus, would there be any difference in every notion of the word?

The first of philosophers to offer the possibility of an authentic life is Kierkegaard. The Danish philosopher, who was also a protestant theologian, divides humanity into two categories in one of his major works, *Either/Or* (1843). He states that people either live within the 'aesthetic sphere' or the 'ethical sphere' but not the authentic life one should live which he terms later as the 'religious sphere'. He believes that almost no one lives within the latter. Although Kierkegaard's existentialism does not exclude, like other existential lines of thought, the existence of God, he gives the religious human life an active role of individualism and freedom in his relation to God, something that has been looked at as controversial and unconventional, especially during his time, for Kierkegaard opposed the

traditional doctrines of the church claiming that they are corrupt and blunt. According to him, faith in God is above all, even the Holy Book. The human who has faith has nothing to abide by but his own journey towards God. The defined Christian institution was not the only source of danger to one's authenticity. While the new Danish social scene was progressing into a capitalist European entity, and the intellectual one was a product of Hegelian positivism (claiming that absolute knowledge is easily attainable by logic), Kierkegaard's aim was to deny these universal stereotypical labels and urge the individual to go back to an undefined state of being that allows redefinition by oneself only. Kierkegaard's strategy is to make the individual doubt these institutions and the knowledge they provided.

In *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard portrays mainly two different opinions about how one should live. Each opinion is written under a fictional pseudo name. The first part that represents the 'either' in the title is written by 'A' or by Johannes Climacus, the author of "The Diary of the Seducer", as entitled in the last section of this part. The second part that represents the 'or' in the title is written by 'B' who is also 'the Judge'. This part is written in the form of a letter to 'A' in persuasion that the ethical life represents a higher way of living. The judge, at the end of the second part, receives a letter in the form of a sermon from a friend which, in return, persuades him to live an even higher way of life than he is living. This latter part, which is entitled "The Edification Which Lies in the Fact that in Relation to God we Are Always in the Wrong", is what Kierkegaard aims at promoting, since it is the way of life he defends in all his coming publications and the one he chose (or at least tried) to live by; this approach to life is what defines the authentic individual religious life.

Before discussing these three parts which represent three spheres (or ways of living), we should reflect on this method of 'indirect communication' Kierkegaard uses.<sup>1</sup> Most of his works are written in this pseudonymous manner; each author has a strikingly different opinion from the other, yet one can easily detect Kierkegaard's opinions since he authored some

books in latter publications. However, the aim for using such a method is debatable still. Some critics believe that this technique is part of the philosophy he conveys, that if we consider what he had written as purely philosophical, which is not the case. Unlike many philosophers, he portrays his ideas using artistic and literary style rather than basic academic formality. Maybe this is part of his mission towards individual subjectivity. He makes the text really challenging for the reader to decode; this challenge is in itself an aim to make the reader active in the process of his formation of an individual identity. Kierkegaard believes that indirect communication has many aims, among them the importance to engage a free reader; “[Kierkegaard] needs to use indirect communication to discourage people from losing themselves in the ‘crowd’” (Aumann 296). Faith, according to him, is not adopting dictated doctrines, and so the reader must identify his own relation to the text. This technique aims at leading the reader away from the ‘crowd’ or the ‘Many’.<sup>2</sup> That is leading the reader away from inauthenticity, for authenticity is subjective rather than universal and common.

Absolute knowledge is rejected by Kierkegaard; the reader must find his own subjective knowledge without any authority, even that of the writer. These conflicting opinions of many writers and characters in his writings (and the implementation of irony and satire) persuade the reader to construe an existential relation to the text, imposing freedom of choice. However, we believe that there is a higher aim than that of engaging the reader. Kierkegaard wanted to break up with traditions and he created his own original representation of what he believed. He is truly the first modernist. Creating a new mode of representation is living up to what you believe in. Even his personal life, as we will see later when we test the practicality of his existentialist authenticity, demonstrates this originality.

The three existential stages start with the ‘aesthetic sphere’. In these three different, yet important, stages, the individual’s self goes through a variety of retrospection. We are using the word ‘retrospection’ to define that important relation the individual self has with what

defines it. In the first stage, the individual self is defined by desire for momentary experiences and innovation. The individual self celebrates immersion in all sorts of pleasures. Johannes Climacus in “The Diary of the Seducer” has a sole desire, his love interest, Cordelia. This stage has been already gone through by Kierkegaard himself when he desired Regine Olsen (1822-1904). He was engaged to her for a year to break the engagement later after realizing that the life he wanted was beyond that of the aesthete and the ethical (the two first stages of his self definition). Kierkegaard argues in his *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* (in a way to help Regine understand his choice) the following:

When the first self submits to the deeper self, they are reconciled and walk on together.... Would you be better off now by having lost some of that burning desire and having won the understanding that life cannot deceive you; is not that kind of losing a winning? That little secret we two have between us, as the deeper self said. What, presumably, is this secret, my listener? What else but this, that with regard to the external a person is capable of nothing at all. If he wants to seize the external immediately, it can be changed in the same instant, and he can be deceived; on the other hand, he can take it with the consciousness that it could also be changed, and he is not deceived even though it is changed, because he has the deeper self’s consent. If he wants to act immediately in the external, to accomplish something, everything can become nothing in that same moment. (316-7)

We can see how the first sphere according to Kierkegaard is a sphere that aims at a self which is not the ‘deeper self’, the one he aims to ultimately establish. The deeper self is also the religious self. The aesthete he used to be used to have the ‘first self’ whose aims do not go beyond his desires. In this passage, the writer is trying to persuade Regine to follow his lead and aim for a higher self by losing that craving to be defined by another’s love. We can see in

the last sentence in the above passage from where Sartre's conception of nothingness is originated. Kierkegaard believes that the originality of the self stems from itself rather than anything external because what is represented in the external is a real 'nothing' since it has not been defined by the individual self, but it has rather been categorized by corrupt existing dogmas created by the crowd to keep the individual being submissive. We exist, and then we create our essences (as Sartre later puts it). The questions to be asked here are: can we say that Kierkegaard lived by what he preached? Can we say that he had lived an authentic life? These questions are to be answered after analyzing the deeper self, also called the religious self, he preaches in his own writings and the one he assumed he almost achieved in his own life. We are using 'almost' because the human being, Kierkegaard argues, never really achieves it completely, but one can constantly struggle to approximate oneself to it.

Climacus, the aesthete, discovers that the possibility of attaining the object desired is more pleasurable than attaining that object. He values and chooses what gives him more pleasure and this makes him create plans and techniques to keep the pleasure maximized. One of them is to vary the object itself. At one point, it was Cordelia; however, after attaining Cordelia following some techniques of seduction, the pleasure is no longer on the peak. Since the sole purpose of the aesthete is to fight boredom, Climacus chooses another object after the process of seduction is over. Even if the object of desire is not the same for every person, this sphere is part of every human self and its natural growth even if when it is the least mature stage.

Although this stage of living is recognized to be creative and important in the human life, it has its limits. The individual self in here acts upon selfish ends that are submissive to desire; thus, there is no freedom, even if it seems the case to the aesthete. Freedom is also freedom from one's libidinal drives. Self-control is a virtue, not according to established ethics, but according to the establishment of the deeper self. Therefore, the individual self

would never get fully satisfied and would look for a higher form of morality. The ethical sphere is morally higher than the aesthetic. It activates one's own moral sense over one's desires. In this stage, the human being realizes that his search for self-recognition has relied on raw materials that stem from an immature self that lacks knowledge of reality. He then steps forward to interact with society and establish knowledge from the world he lives in. This is an important step for the later personal existential one that embodies rebellion from that sensible established self.

The ethical sphere advocated by the judge is a sphere of moral stability, a life that was once attractive to melancholic Kierkegaard when he wanted a family with Regine. What urges the self to pursue a more ethical life is the emptiness of the immediacy of pleasure and the deception one realizes of its impossible permanency. It causes what Kierkegaard labels as despair.<sup>4</sup> And according to Leone, "when the self experiences despair for the first time, it is brought to an awareness of itself" (18). To reach "full selfhood", which is Kierkegaard's chief aim, one needn't measure oneself with something that is temporal like human love and lust (17-8).

The judge persuades the aesthete to submit himself to repetition as an honorable sacrifice to refine the self. He explains, in *Either/Or, Part II*, that "the self that is the objective is not only a personal self but a social, a civic self. He then possesses himself as a task in an activity whereby he engages in the affairs of life as this specific personality. Here his task is not to form himself but to act, and yet he forms himself at the same time", for at this second level of ethical awareness, the "individual lives in such a way that he is continually transferring himself from one stage to another" (262-3). In here, Kierkegaard is trying to show a higher morality, yet this Kantian and Hegelian morality which restricts the human life and its freedom is also rejected. To Kant and Hegel, God's ethics do not contradict with social ethics. To Kierkegaard, the main dilemma lies in here. Our relation to God is a relation that is

based on the absurd rather than logic. One does not believe in God; one has faith in God. Believing requires logic and the timeless existence of God requires faith. Kierkegaard provides the reader with many illustrations in his *Fear and Trembling* (1843). Among these is the story of Abraham and his decision to kill his son. The action according to society is immoral, yet it is considered a leap of faith. The self that acts upon such a matter is the highest. It is the religious self.

The last sphere is the religious sphere. This sphere speaks about the self that reaches existential authenticity. Before this final realization, the self approaches another level of despair. Again, the self needs to allow itself to experience despair and understand its nature. To ignore and to believe that it is just a passing melancholy is to deny one's ultimate freedom. Despair lies in that the human realizes that he is absolutely free. Ultimate freedom of choice is its main source. Despair again comes from the realization that faith is beyond reason and that what the ethical sphere offers is more mechanical than what defines human nature. To choose one's humanity before the eternal God needs a leap of faith rather than reason. In discovering that all what has been established in the world does not define the self and that the self is in a space of nothingness, the individual experiences the invalidity of the life he is leading. The limitless nature of his freedom of choice puts the individual in a situation he has never experienced before. The key lies, according to Kierkegaard, in accepting despair and accepting God's infinite forgiveness. That is the key lies, when disregarding the religious discourse in here, in the irrational absurd rather than the absolute human rationality that defined existence. It lies in the nothingness. In here, we can see how the self forms itself freely. The existentialism of Nietzsche, Husserl, and Sartre derives from the formation of this deeper self, which Kierkegaard approves of as the most authentic.

Kierkegaard defines his version of authenticity in his journal in 1835 as seeking "a truth which is truth for me, to find the idea for which I am willing to live and die" (*The*

*Prayers of Kierkegaard* 129). To be authentic is to attain that religious self. Kierkegaard sacrificed his love for Regine Olsen and his position in society (for he was the enemy of so many celebrated intellectuals at that time). He chose to pursue an existential journey where he rarely interacted with the external world. What we can deduce is that Kierkegaard's accounts and journals show that he has found that idea which is true to him, but sometimes we are not what we write. After Regine got married, he attempted several times to have a private conversation with her which was denied by her husband. What would the result of that conversation lead to if it was allowed? To answer if the philosophers who promoted for an existential life lived that life is impossible. The only possible answer to see if such a life is possible stems from one's self only, and what better concrete creation of that self than its reflection in art? Only artists can give an answer to this question. The concreteness of the philosophy might only be perceptible in artistic creation. Ezra Pound's 'to make it new' is an existential motto after all. However, this part of discussion will be left for the third section in this chapter. Since the concreteness of the concept of authenticity is to be further analyzed in works of fiction, investigating the lives of the coming philosophers will not be useful to the research.

Latter thinkers have one radical difference in their existential doctrines. Unlike Kierkegaard, belief in God posed a problem for thinkers like the German philosopher, Nietzsche. However, both define authenticity in the same way; while, to Kierkegaard, it is being true to oneself, to Nietzsche, it is 'becoming what one is'. Nietzsche argues that there is a human exemplar, also called 'the overman', that everyone should aspire to be like.<sup>4</sup> The idea is inspired from a shocking realization that the human future and existence is already defined with established moralities that occurred even before his own existence. According to Nietzsche, a crisis is on the way, where the future that lies ahead is to be meaningless. Thus, it is the responsibility of the human being to revolutionize morality. And this human needs to go

through many stages of destruction and reconstruction to rebuild himself and his future. Not any human is capable of this. Nevertheless, as much optimistic as this seems, Nietzsche focuses on destruction and the reasons for it more than he does on reconstruction. His existential views are more distrustful and nihilistic in nature than those of Heidegger and Sartre.

What sums up Nietzsche's philosophy is his saying, in *Twilight of the Idols and the Antichrist*, "I mistrust all systemisers, and avoid them. The will to system is a lack of rectitude" (26). The word 'systemisers' is a categorization of a group of thinkers who have long governed the world, imposing the necessity of unity and objectivity. Among them are the doctrines of Judeo-Christian tradition and Kantian ethics. Nietzsche claims that while these doctrines supposedly aimed at promoting an absolute truth, this very notion led to their collapse in the modern world. The concept of 'truth' is in itself changed, ridding itself of the principle of absoluteness. Behind creating these doctrines, Nietzsche believes, lies a 'will to power' and to control the world. For even philosophers cannot claim that they are not guided by their inner interests. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche questions the meaning of 'knowledge' itself since it is linked to truth. What lies behind what we 'know' is what we 'believe', and thus everything is rather imposed on the 'herd'.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the highest values of the modern age are questioned and devalued.

Before challenging philosophical doctrines that promote objective truth (Kantian ethics in particular), Nietzsche attacks religious dogmas asserting that they have led to a crisis of meaning in the modern period by devaluing the truth that has long been cultivated by the priest. In *The Gay Science*, he argues:

One can see *what* it was that actually triumphed over the Christian god:  
Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness that was taken ever more  
rigorously .... Looking at nature as if it were proof of the goodness and care of

a god; interpreting history in honour of some divine reason, as a continual testimony of a moral world order and ultimate moral purposes; interpreting one's own experiences as pious people have long interpreted theirs, as if everything were providential, a hint, designed and ordained for the sake of salvation of the soul - that is *over* now; that has conscience *against* it; every refined conscience considers it to be indecent, dishonest, a form of mendacity, effeminacy, weakness, cowardice. (219)

The illusions, created by the Christian morality to provide unity and order in the world, have revealed themselves to the modern disillusioned man. The truth that has been provided by Christianity has devalued itself as would, inevitably, any higher value. What has constructed it in the first place is a need for a 'meaning' (or, as put in the quote above, an 'interpretation' of one human experience and generalizing its value), a concept that is very important in understanding the reason behind the acceptance of such illusions. The world, or rather existence, has no intrinsic value, meaning, or truth. The human being has been always interested in creating a certain meaning to his life and the world he lives in whereas, according to Nietzsche, the world has no meaning. These human mythological inventions, along with the creation of God, aim at defining existence. However, there is another aim which is the will to power, to control the world, and to weaken the strong and the free-spirited, or, as Nietzsche puts it in the quote, 'every refined conscience'.

Kantian morality of absolute reason is derived from Christian values. Nietzsche reinforces this point in almost all his works, stating that Kant is "inferior in his psychology and knowledge of human nature; way off when it comes to great historical values (French Revolution); a moral fanatic à la Rousseau; a subterranean Christianity in his values; a dogmatist through and through" (*The Will to Power* 64). Nietzsche is against any systemiser or legislator, and Kant is one. Kant's philosophy restricts the human nature to reason and does

not see beyond it, a point which Nietzsche sees as derivative and unoriginal, being a product of Christian thought. The result of restricting humanity to mere reason has led to its demise. What makes Nietzsche's philosophy pessimistic is that he himself is apologetic about the discovery. We notice this regret when the madman (one of the characters he speaks through) mourns the death of God: "The madman jumped into their [a group of contented atheists] midst and pierced them with his eyes. 'Where is God?' he cried; 'I'll tell you! *We have killed him* - you and I! We are all his murderers" (*The Gay Science* 119). The madman asks frantically several questions on how they 'killed' Him and "how were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving to now? Where are we moving to? Away from all suns? Are we not continually falling? And backwards, sideways, forwards, in all directions? Is there still an up and a down?" (119-20). The tone in here is far from that of satisfaction. It's clear that Nietzsche is not celebrating the death of God as many critics believe. Through the madman (and madness is a virtue in the philosophy of Nietzsche since it is the antithesis of reason), we can see how God has constituted a natural cycle of the human life. That means that even if 'killing' Him would provide them with freedom to constitute a new meaning to life, that meaning is still meaningless. There is and there will be no intrinsic value to anything, a point in which coming, and more optimistic, existentialists will contradict. In here lies the pessimistic perspective of Nietzsche's thought, a shocking perspective that has led many artists to destroy and recreate continuously, leading to a great focus on the aesthetic value of art rather than its content.

Nietzsche's philosophy is labeled, because of its pessimistic outlook, as more nihilistic than existentialist, for nihilism has a more destructive position, where the individual realizes that he is living in "an infinite nothing" (120), with a realization of an absolute freedom to exert his own powers and values that, eventually, have no values in themselves: "Nihilism

does not only contemplate the ‘in vain!’ nor is it merely the belief that everything deserves to perish: one helps to destroy.- This is, if you will, illogical; but the nihilist does not believe that one needs to be logical” (*The Will to Power* 18). The idea of being logical or reasonable is totally disproved, for Nietzsche does not see what balances it.

Nietzsche gives the example of how the balanced Greek culture was defined by two gods, Apollo and Dionysus. The dichotomy has also defined many philosophical doctrines, among them Nietzsche’s. Apollo and Dionysus, both sons of Zeus, represent antithetical principles and characters, one promoting logic, order, and rationality and the other appealing to emotions, chaos, and even madness. The Apollonian concept, according to Nietzsche, has been overtly celebrated in philosophy whereas the Dionysian has been overlooked and ignored while having similar significance. Modern philosophy, Kantian in particular, has based living and ethics on the Apollonian and thus creating imbalance.

Nietzsche argues that the Apollonian and the Dionysian spring from the human nature. The rational and the emotional are two natural constituents the human should not deny or repress. The impulsive animal, when repressed, creates an imbalance in the human life and the result would be nihilistic, a total denial of the values created by the rational. According to Nietzsche, the Greek culture started to collapse when the Greeks gave more value to Apollo and ignored Dionysus. Modern philosophers preached the idea of control, wisdom and rationality, inherited from the ideology of Socrates. Nietzsche opposes this ideology believing that it is harmful to the human since it counters its nature. He rather celebrates and glorifies the human instinct and impulsiveness which defines one’s authenticity and individualism.

It is from this idea that Nietzsche constitutes a background for a promising future of a supreme being. Nietzsche conceptualizes the authentic being as the ‘overman’. The latter is contrasted with what Nietzsche calls the ‘last man’ in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (also conceptualized as the ‘everyday man’ and the ‘common man’). The overman is the future

product of a nihilistic society. He is the strong spirited, the Dionysian man. He opts for irrationality, spirit, passion, instinct, and originality rather than universality and commonness. In here, Nietzsche creates an optimistic exemplar of a possible human model. This man rejects former values and redefines his own based on absolute freedom.

What constrains Nietzschean existentialist freedom is desire, for isn't desire a human condition and factor that forbids the excellence of the overman's freedom? Doesn't this create some commonness between humans that Nietzsche is denying? The overman is a man that seeks power rather than originality. This is what makes Nietzsche's existentialism lacking, yet Nietzsche's aim is to show that power is and will always be willed by the human. Maybe his creation of the overman is another way of creating a different path for human dictatorship or, as other critics label it, aristocracy rather than freedom, although the one in power is the only model for freedom. The overman's motivating aim is to create the best version of himself. With the absence of God and the disillusionment of the concept of the 'other-worldly', Nietzsche reintegrates the ancient idea of the 'eternal recurrence' where time repeats itself to create more opportunities for men to become their best selves. Living the same life many times would push the individual to overcome all his weaknesses. The image, according to Nietzsche, is necessary for the overman to reach authenticity.

The last man is the one who feels comfort following the herd. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche pursues, rather through his protagonist, humans to break free from the herd ruled by the last man:

““What is love? What is creation? What is yearning? What is a star?”—  
thus asks the last human and then blinks.

‘For the earth has now become small, and upon it hops the last human,  
who makes everything small. Its race is as unexterminable as the ground-flea;  
the last human lives the longest.

“‘We contrived happiness’— say the last humans and they blink.

‘They have left the regions when the living was hard, for one needs warmth. (16)

In here, it’s clear that the last man is the opposite of the overman who is Zarathustra himself in this book. While the last man seeks warmth, the overman seeks adventures and challenges. He experiments to overcome himself. The last man lacks taste, will, and authenticity. His existence is related to the existence of a larger group of people, the herd, who are agents for God, while the overman is a replacement of God. Morality and other similarly arrogant values are to be replaced by going back to human nature where all what is animalistic rules the life of the individual, where instinct is favored over rationality. Nietzsche believes that all the values that have been created to protect men from the coming nihilistic state of a society are put to distract him from questions of the vague worth of existence itself. Every plan by the last man is a plan to constraint the overman from unleashing his special powers and experimenting with the unknown, or rather the ‘immoral’. However, if there is more than one man who has special powers, which is always the case, won’t that make the overman a common man? If not, if everyman is different, then why does Zarathustra ask the common man to follow his lead? Doesn’t he ask all men to obey nothing but their instincts? Or is Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) the one and only overman, the only substitute for God? Doesn’t that create another society where man is part of the herd? Aren’t we repeating the same inauthentic cycle here?

While Nietzsche’s thought is pro-aristocratic, Heidegger’s, rather like Sartre’s, is didactic, opening the path of an authentic life to every individual. Another difference in Heidegger’s, and Sartre’s, thought is that it has an optimistic perspective as they believe that the human being, when shocked with the nihilistic value of his history, strives to redefine himself. This redefinition is not meaningless in itself the way Nietzsche argues. Heidegger’s

existentialism is more à la Kierkegaard; while confessing a certain nothingness that characterizes the human existence, it also promotes an optimistic recreation of an authentic life.

Although Heidegger denied, in a letter to Jean Beaufret entitled “Letter On Humanism” (1946) answering his questions on the relation of his conception of humanism to Sartre’s uprising existentialist philosophy, that he’s an existentialist maintaining that Sartre focuses on existence as separate from the human being while he stresses the importance of existence and the world as an important referential point to the human being, in his *Being and Time*, he states that “the obstinacy of the ‘nothing and nowhere within-the-world’ means as a phenomenon that the world as such is that in the face of which one has anxiety” (Heidegger 231), which means that “the utter insignificance which makes itself known in the ‘nothing and nowhere’, does not signify that the world is absent, but tells us that entities within-the-world are of so little importance in themselves that on the basis of this insignificance of what is within the- world, the world in its worldhood is all that still obtrudes itself” (231). The world is not excluded in the way Sartrean, or Cartesian, metaphysics assure. They both value the thinking individual as the most supreme world while Heidegger believes that ‘being’, which is Man, is in a constant process of becoming what it should be in the world. However, many Heideggerian ideas confirm that he’s an existentialist. His focus on themes of existence, anxiety, the crowd, and authenticity (sometimes with different conceptualization) is apparent in his works, paving the way for a revolutionary movement structured and labeled later as ‘existentialism’ by Sartre. In his letter, we can see that anxiety, from ‘Angst’, and its realization of the nothingness of the world is an evident theme in his philosophy.

Heidegger’s Dasein –literally ‘being-there’, which also refers to a ‘being-in-the-world– is not like that of Nietzsche. He is not an overman. He is not defined by super powers or special talents. What makes him special is his attentiveness to his changing moods. Boredom

and Angst are two examples of these moods. Dasein is neither an object nor a subject on its own; it is always a subject, or consciousness in relation to an object. According to Heidegger, we cannot separate consciousness from its object. Consciousness is a consciousness of something.<sup>6</sup> And the relation of consciousness to its moods, which we will deal with later, is the most important act of ‘being-in-the-world’ (the act of being conscious of something). The main focus in here is understanding ‘Being’. The question to be answered is: what is ‘Being’? The best conditions to find an answer to this question is to capture ‘being’ in a certain state; that is ‘Dasein’. In here Being, different from other units (like animals), is aware of itself and its ‘existence’ and asks itself about its meaning. Dasein represents this stage of being where Being questions its Being.

‘Existence’ is, thus, the result of Dasein in the act of Being. It is in here that the human being starts to act in an existential manner; he realizes that he has different possibilities of defining who he is; Heidegger argues that “Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence-in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself. Dasein has either chosen these possibilities itself, or got itself into them, or grown up in them already. Only the particular Dasein decides its existence, whether it does so by taking hold or by neglecting” (33) Heidegger adds that “the question of existence never gets straightened out except through existing itself. The understanding of oneself which leads along this way we call ‘existentiell’” (33). Existence is what makes Dasein different from what Heidegger calls ‘Presence-at-hand’, or what we can conceptualize as the existence of predefined objects. A table or a house’s essence is predetermined while Dasein’s Being is not. Every Dasein is to define itself (himself) in a different way from another Dasein because both have different experiences of Being as to find different possibilities for themselves. Thus, objects are ‘Present-at-hand’ already and Dasein ‘exists’. We can understand from Heidegger’s conception of existence that those who are not aware that they exist are simply ‘Present-at-hand’ even if they are humans.

Inauthenticity is to be 'Present-at-hand', to deny one's existence and the will to choose one's life.

The question to be asked here is how does an ordinary human being who is in the midst of everyday life decides to 'exist' and to 'be'? In Heideggerian words, what is it that leads those who are 'present-at-hand' to 'exist'? We have already mentioned before the concept 'angst'; that is anxiety. Anxiety is a key existential concept.<sup>7</sup> Anxiety is a sporadic experience which embodies "a moment of confusion" (Richard Polt 77) that the Dasein goes through in the process of Being. It is one of the illuminating moods (another dealt with by Heidegger is boredom) in the sense that it draws the attention of Man to his existence. Anxiety is not to be confused with fear here. Fear's object is known while anxiety's object is unknown, which leads Dasein to focus on his being rather than external conditions. So how can such an undefined mood define who we are? According to Heidegger, the constant repetitive structure of 'everydayness', he also calls 'falling' and 'inauthenticity', comes to rare moments of realization that the Dasein must cease to be authentic. Falling "has mostly the character of Being-lost in the publicness of the 'they'. Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away ... from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the 'world'" (Heidegger 220). This is the first, inauthentic, stage before anxiety. In here, Dasein is wholly guided by the 'they' and accepts his state of 'present-at-hand'.<sup>8</sup> The 'they', or 'Das Man', is other people who are conformed to conventions or impose conformity. 'Falleness' is a condition where the Dasein is absorbed in the 'world' and its state of 'everydayness'. However, as negative as this seems, Heidegger believes that it is an important step that would lead to another complementary state he conceptualizes as 'thrownness'. Thrownness, unlike falling, lacks the sense of comfort and ease. In here, Dasein starts to suspect that former sense of belonging to the world. Anxiety is inevitable where Dasein feels as if 'thrown' into a world

that is not a home anymore. One unrecommended behavior to reach authenticity is not to flee this mood.

Anxiety leads to authenticity when Dasein fulfills an understanding of its 'Oneness'. This oneness is only achieved when Dasein's thrown projection in the world is 'Being-a-whole' or 'Being-towards-death'. In here, Heidegger posits Dasein within its finite temporal framework. Being is always in the process towards death. When Dasein is aware of this, it is also aware of the ever-changing mode of its being; it is never wholly defined and fixed. It is rather in a constant mode of change. Even if death "is something that stands before us—something impending," it is like any other impending 'present-at-hand' like a "storm, the remodelling of the house, or the arrival of a friend" (294). Death is just another possibility for Dasein to be its best self, its 'Oneness', which is the authentic self:

Death is a possibility-of-Being which Dasein itself has to take over in every case. With death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. This is a possibility in which the issue is nothing less than Dasein's Being-in-the-world. Its death is the possibility of no-longer being-able-to-be-there. If Dasein stands before itself as this possibility, it has been fully assigned to its ownmost potentiality-for-Being. When it stands before itself in this way, all its relations to any other Dasein have been undone. This ownmost non-relational possibility is at the same time the uttermost one. (294)

And so the authentic being is Dasein that embraces anxiety, rather than fleeing it, and achieves an understanding of its being through the possibility of death, the only possibility that separates him completely from other Dasein. And because it's wholly separated, it's finally 'Being-a-whole' —what Heidegger also calls the 'One', completely independent from the 'They'.

Sartre existentialism is highly inspired by Husserl's (the founder of phenomenology and the teacher and inspirer of Heidegger) and Heidegger's thought. It is through the philosophical systemizing of Sartre that existentialism emerged as an independent widespread philosophy. His most influential work, *Being and Nothingness* (1943), is called the 'bible of existentialism'. What makes his philosophy popular is its accessibility to the common man; his "Existentialism is a Humanism" (1946), based on a lecture he held in 1945 in Paris, is an oversimplifying work that promotes freedom of choice and elevates the human individual to a position of a most supreme being. It is Sartre that inspired the philosophical work of Fowles.

Sartre, as Husserl, speaks of consciousness as, rather than a thing, an active process of 'intending' things. He differentiates concepts like 'self' and 'ego' from what he calls 'consciousness'. Consciousness is nothing but intentionality, for it is always in the process of actively being conscious of something. It is different from the self and the ego in the sense that it is not a substance; it is rather 'no-thing'. Consciousness is always distinguishable from the things it intends, for it is free. It is the one that gives definition to 'self' and 'ego'. Sartre's opinion in here is in opposition to that of Freud. According to him, there are no powers that control the human consciousness; it is rather consciousness that has the power to constitute an ego, for the ego is an empirical object intended by consciousness. The ego is rather like the world; they are transcendent unities that are observable to other individuals than the holder of that ego. Consciousness, on the other hand, is individualistic and every individual's consciousness is necessarily different from the others' since the activity of intentionality is an act of freedom of choice: "The being of consciousness is to exist by itself, then to make itself be and thereby to pass beyond [sic] itself. In this sense consciousness is perpetually escaping itself, belief becomes non-belief, the immediate becomes mediation, the absolute becomes relative, and the relative becomes absolute" (Sartre 130). Thus, consciousness is rather nothing since it is in a constant process of negating and recreating in the world. Based on this

understanding, we can see how existence essentially precedes essence. We draw every idea, every image, and every emotion through our consciousness. Ideas and emotions are a result of our consciousness intending objects, which is the reason why we have the right and the power to negate every existing idea if we will. Consciousness, to Sartre, is freedom.

Consciousness, or being (as Heidegger puts it), consists of the ‘for-itself’ (translated from ‘pour-soi’) and the ‘in-itself’ (translated from ‘en-soi’). They are both two modes of consciousness, one ‘authentic’ and the other is ‘bad faith’ (*mauvaise fois*), which means inauthenticity. What leads to ‘bad faith’ is accepting a state of being imposed by the world, the ‘in-itself’. The in-itself is the same as Cartesian cogito; that is it is the established ‘I am’ of every person. Thus, it “is full of itself, and no more total plenitude can be imagined, no more perfect equivalence of content to container. There is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in” (74). Unlike the for-itself, the in-itself has no question and awareness of itself since it is in a state of comfort about who it is. Sartre gives the example of a peeping Tom who is not conscious of his act peeping through a key-hole to see an infidelity going on. Tom before hearing footsteps approaching him isn’t conscious of being a voyeur; being a voyeur is his in-itself. It’s after hearing those footsteps that he starts thinking about him being a voyeur; the act of thinking –that is the act of being conscious of the in-itself – is the for-itself. As a result, “the for-itself is the in-itself losing itself as in-itself in order to found itself as consciousness.” (82) In here lies the gap between the in-itself and the for-itself, which the inauthentic being tries, since he experiences ‘anguish’ as a result, to close and make the for-itself the same as the in-itself; that is to satisfy himself with the knowledge of the former-founded definition of self.

The reason behind this choice is escaping anguish that rises from the realization of the ‘nothingness’ that lies behind the question ‘who am I?’: “[t]he for-itself, as the foundation of itself, is the upsurge of the negation. The for-itself founds itself in so far as it denies in

relation to *itself* a certain being or a mode of being. What it denies or nihilates, as we know, is being-in-itself. But no matter *what* being-in-itself: human reality *is* before all else its own nothingness” (88). The for-itself is an annihilation of the in-itself. It is consciousness rather than a constituent of consciousness, for it just reflects on the in-itself rather than be the in-itself. It is the for-itself that founds the self consciously and willingly. The nothingness realized gives way to freedom to choose oneself and recreate, or rather ‘create’ because it is the first time it is aware of the process of creation, itself. Sartre stresses this point by stating that “the whole idea of foundation comes into the world through the for-itself. It is not only that the for-itself as a nihilated in-itself is itself given a foundation, but with it foundation appears for the first time” (82). The for-itself satisfies itself with the in-itself only when the individual does not accept that freedom and that ultimate possibility of becoming what one wishes to be; that is called ‘bad faith’.

Absolute freedom is to be embraced by the authentic individual, even if the choice to be taken seems morally inappropriate, for what is virtuous according to Sartre is what is authentic, is choosing one’s for-itself over the in-itself. Thus, what is moral is no longer what is socially, legally, or religiously – or even what abides to ‘human nature’ – acceptable; it is rather embracing anguish and the possibilities of founding one’s self from the nothingness inherent in the nature of existence. Bad faith is fleeing this anguish and choosing that self one has found himself in; that is choosing a mechanical role of an object rather than a conscious subject. In his *Saint Genet, Actor and Martyr* (1952), Sartre writes about the French playwright’s way of life, morality, and writing and describes his rebellious homosexuality, street fighting, and thieving as acts of good faith. Genet’s refusal to conform and his acts of absolute freedom are models of good faith. Thus, morality – social morality in particular – is not important; it is even better refuted. One can easily see that Sartre’s doctrines might be understood as promoting immorality and an exclusion of the other. Genet stole from another

individual who had the right to his for-itself and had, or supposed to have, a freedom of his own, or maybe what had been stolen by Genet were 'nothings' rather than valuable things. Maybe at that stage, the victim was to become conscious of his own nothingness.

Nevertheless, it could be a consciously and newly established something rather than a thing.

A person with bad faith can be a socially accepted, moral being while a person with good faith can be a criminal. This is how Sartre sees the authentic being. No wonder then that some people see Hitler's immoral actions as an authentic work of art. Modern and postmodern art is highly influenced by this ideology. Art and morality no longer coincide to be one.

Sartre gives also the example of a café waiter who moves in a mechanical way and has exaggerated actions of eagerness to please his costumers. This waiter, according to Sartre, is a model of bad faith. He knows he is free, yet he is denying it. He is lying to himself. Bad faith is not only a moment of denial; it is rather a moment of consciousness, or recognition that has not been taken into consideration. Thus, someone who is not yet conscious is not in bad faith. It is the person who is conscious of his in-itself and finally knows the unlimited freedom of possibilities he possesses who is in bad faith. Sartre argues that "if bad faith is possible, it is because it is an immediate, permanent threat to every project of the human being; it is because consciousness conceals in its being a permanent risk of bad faith. The origin of this risk is the fact that the nature of consciousness simultaneously is to be what it is not and not to be what it is" (70). 'What it is not' is the familiar and 'what it is' is the uncanny nothingness that generates anguish. The waiter, in Sartre's example, is an actor who is fully aware of his role. Thus, there is no room for unconsciousness. We are always conscious according to Sartre. The Freudian idea of unconsciousness is not acceptable to Sartre because he believes that we choose that state of ignorance, or rather denial, when we cannot handle freedom. Hypocrisy is equivalent to bad faith. Conforming to the laws made by others who intend to rule (he calls this category 'swine') and following the masses (or 'cowards') are acts of bad faith. We will

deal with examples of Sartrean bad faith and good faith models in Fowles' novels in the second and third chapters when we discuss models of inauthentic and authentic characters.

The absolute freedom that condemns the holder of the for-itself to choose what he wants is not arbitrary as one may think. Sartre believes that this freedom comes in an instant of a decided project. To be is to act. The freedom comes as a result of whether one wants to flee a certain imposed situation or not, but the constraints of the given situation are still problematic here. Sartre gives the example of climbing a mountain. Although the mountain is recognized as 'brute existent', the 'scalability' of the possibility of climbing comes as a result of the project itself. Thus, any constraint for freedom – that is 'brute existent' – is there as long as it is part of the project. Thus, the project gives meaning to it. Meaning is not inherent in it before that stage. The project is the authentic product of embracing the for-itself, but the questions that should be asked here are: what if the project is not self-fulfilling as one expects? Is authenticity all that matters to every individual? Absurdist, unlike existentialists, think that nothing matters. They do not just believe that there is no inherent meaning; they also claim that since there is no inherent meaning, there should be none. We believe that absurdism is rather more artistic, since they claim there is a combination of a certain strength and weakness that dominates humans in the modern age. Although they have the strength to annihilate God and all established morality, they also confess a weakness of an inability to find meaning to existence and make of Man a superman. They are lost and that loss finds its place best in art. And this art is not as didactic as an existential product of art would be. This is what makes Albert Camus's (1913-1960) works of art more artistically genuine than Sartre's; (however, this point is still to be proved in the works of Fowles). Although they were close friends, their ontological views differ. The difference is not radical, but it is vital in terms of their relation to art. Albert Camus's philosophy and art celebrate the absurd more than the existential. He is more of an artist than a philosopher though. "The Myth of

Sisyphus" (1942) is his contribution to the philosophy. Camus's view is even more pessimistic than that of Nietzsche. Nietzsche does, in a way, celebrate the ethics of the overman who is to find meaning. There is another possible way to define existence for Nietzsche as well, which is creating art. Art is a way of creating meaning, even if it is an illusion. Art can give the 'appearance' of being beautiful. Camus disagrees in that he thinks that even art cannot create meaning.

The absurd, to Camus, is a result of a clash between the rational perspective we hold on the universe and the real irrational, unintelligible universe. Unlike any other agent in the world, the existentialist and the absurdist realize and acknowledge this conflict. However, the absurdist does not seek any solutions, thinking that there is none. Camus illustrates the experience of the absurdist through the life of Sisyphus. Sisyphus is a figure from Greek mythology that has been condemned by the gods to do the same task repeatedly as long as he lives. The task is in itself meaningless, thrusting a rock up a mountain and seeing it roll down again. The task is analogical to that of all men's. All our activities that we former based on values are meaningless in themselves since the values are based on rationality that is at odds with the world's absurdity; as a result, the tasks are also absurd and meaningless. At the end of the essay, Camus concludes: "I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He, too, concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile" (111). Camus rejects the idea of God and other comforting myths that complement the rational. He even rejects the existential solutions, including Kierkegaard's leap of faith. To create new values and annihilate former ones is creating a nihilistic cycle that would lead nowhere. The only option is to embrace the absurd and have the Sisyphus' courage to do the same meaningless task again and again because, to him, "[e]ach atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself

forms a world. The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (111). The view is highly pessimistic, which puts Camus in a category that is separate from the existential. However, no matter how pessimistic his perspective is, it finds art more of a home to it than philosophy, yet this claim is to be discussed further along the whole research.

Based on our reading, existentialists believe that the world is meaningless but authentic meaning is possible for the individual who adopts his unconditional freedom. If one finally finds meaning though, should one share it? And by sharing it, does not that mean that he is dictating meaning on other wanting-to-be existential beings? Shouldn't they find their own meaning? Can the human be able not to share? And if he can, would it not condemn him to a solipsist's world? Maybe other people have an urge to belong which is promoted by the inauthentic in-itself. In this regard, authenticity is a result of solipsism only, of Man existing alone in the world. These questions and exclamations are best to be answered when analyzing the novels because only the artist can sketch a world where answers are possible. However, even the artist can fail. The success or the failure is part of answering the problematic of the research.

Existential authenticity is not necessarily something new. It is rather something that is absolutely personal. Only the individual who experiences it would know if he achieves that stage or not. Sartre's thought is inspired by Heidegger's and other existential thinkers; Heidegger's thought is inspired by that of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. However, we cannot say that Sartre is not authentic, since his work is a personal statement of values. We cannot say that Fowles' *The Aristos* is inauthentic as well if it conveys the same values; nevertheless, an artist's work, unlike that of a philosopher, can be measured in terms of authenticity since art can and cannot be personal. The work is not the artist's only; it is the audience's as well.

## 1.2. John Fowles' Conception of the Authentic: The Journey from the 'Many' to the 'Few' and Other Fowlesean Concepts

Fowles' *The Aristos* is, as he claims, an existential attempt at being authentic. It is, thus, a step of breaking free from all restraints of categorization. In *The Aristos*, Fowles opens up about his view and perspective on life in a way he rarely deals with in his fiction. However, it is from *The Aristos* that his ideas' and characters' outline come from; his fiction's background is mainly sketched on the basis of this particular work of non-fiction.

As we have already mentioned, the sole aim of this work is to reach a certain existential freedom against the restraints of society and all that entails labeling and definition. Fowles abhors categorization of any kind, even necessary ones: "To call a man a plumber is to describe one aspect of him, but it is also to obscure a number of others" (A 7). This is the main reason of the publishing of *The Aristos* against the advice of many who read it. He does not want to be labeled as a novelist, for he "want[s] no more than that [he] express[es] [him]self in printed words" (7). A 'writer' is still a way of categorization, but at least it is more open and far-reaching than a novelist. He, thus, seized the opportunity of the success of the publishing of his first novel to publish *The Aristos*.

The reason why many critics advised against its publication does not only derive from what it promotes in terms of ideas. Fowles argues that the style in which it is written is offensive. However, he believes "that too sprang from a desire to nourish individuality" (7). The book is written in the form of fragmented notes, rather than a dialogue, addressed to a certain 'you', probably the reader. The ancient tradition of a dialogue has been replaced with an authoritative note here, which makes the reader less inferior, since the other in every dialogue is rather a subordinate other. Maybe the discourse is not even authoritative as Fowles stresses the freedom of the reader in refuting his opinions; the book is after all a set of

opinions that have no empirical substance. Furthermore, the book's fragments are modeled on Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* (1669) and what survived from Heraclitus's dispatched work.

The first note in the book explains how the style is of second importance to the writer since what he addresses in it is higher: "The book you are about to begin is written in the form of notes. This is not laziness on my part, but an attempt to suppress all rhetoric, all persuasion through style. Many of the notes are dogmatic expressions of opinion; and here, similarly, my intention is not to bludgeon into belief, but to banish all possibility of persuasion by artificial means" (13). Artificiality of style is of lesser importance to what the writer aims at. And he is also afraid that the style would be a distraction to the reader, even the simplest of readers, to understand his rather 'dogmatic expressions of opinion'. It is a product of existential freedom after all and the 'image' the critics wanted him to preserve is of no importance to him. What's more important is "to preserve the freedom of the individual" (7). This individuality, mostly celebrated in existential thought, is promoted in all the chapters within the book.

In the first chapter, entitled "The Universal Situation", Fowles begins by explaining the human existence. He believes that 'law' and 'chaos' are what controls existence, yet both are indifferent and inconsiderate to the human condition. They destroy and dictate on the individual. They are also destructive to one another (15). Law destroys chaos and chaos reciprocates, creating new cycles of history. Thus, existence is characterized by no supreme unchangeable values. In here lies Fowles' conception of existential nothingness. He further stresses the insignificance of established values by comparing the human situation to humans being on a raft in an 'endless ocean'. Man believes, according to Fowles, that before being on that raft, there was a 'wreck', a catastrophic event that led to their collapse; before it, there was the golden age analogous to Heaven. Man also believes that after this trip on the raft lies a bright future ahead, promising great opportunities with no human misery and conflict. However, while on the raft, "he is miserably *en passage*" (15). This myth is what

characterizes existence according to most men. To Fowles, “there was no wreck; there will be no promised land” (16). Most men do not see this because they create what Fowles calls ‘an agent’, mostly a god, someone to look up to or to blame for their situation. However, there is always this one man who does not look for reasons for existence. He rather “wells from the mysterious spring” (16). This man is aware of his existence, yet its inexplicability causes him anxiety. The myth of a glorious past and a promising future is too easy for him. He sees that the ocean is endless and that they are rather controlled by ‘hazard’, another important concept in Fowles’ philosophy. He simply sees that the world is getting worse and its survival is always uncertain.

The picture drawn by Fowles is not a pessimistic one. This man sees the nothingness that surrounds the meaning of existence and expects nothing from it. He understands that hazard offers opportunities for an unconditional freedom. No matter how satisfactory the image of god is, it always denies hazard, the only possibility to be happy for the reason that it allows us absolute freedom. It is the price of freedom that we also “call suffering, death, disaster, misfortune, tragedy” for “the only alternative to this suffering freedom is an unsuffering unfreedom” (18). God, along with all traditions of western morality, is the product of the latter.

Fowles stresses the importance of the ‘now’, of our actual universe, as “the best possible situation” since there is no promised land, or rather we do not know for sure that there will be one (20). The mystery formed by the universe and the effect of hazard, the notion that anything can happen no matter what one plans, create a wall around our world and our knowledge of it. This wall should not be the source of frustration; it rather brings “us back to the now, to life, to our time being” (20). It is the same conception of Sartrean nothingness, yet Sartre’s existential being’s realization of nothingness is a proud one because he knows the world holds no meaning. Fowles’ individual is less proud since his realization is a confession

of the inadequacy of the human knowledge, as it seems. The mysteries of the universe, the belief that we shall never know for sure, are what leads us back to the now.

According to Fowles, existence can be understood but God cannot. He puts the word 'God' between inverted commas throughout the whole book "to purge it of all its human associations" (22). What Fowles thinks attainable to humans "is why existence *is as it is*; why it requires such laws and such constituents to continue" but "we shall never learn *why* it is" (22). That is we shall never know God. However, to Fowles it is always an advantage that we live in mystery. The only virtue that comes from this lack of knowledge is freedom of will which is "the highest human good" (26). Fowles sees that it is fairly impossible for this free will and the divinity to co-exist. Our finite nature as humans (he also conceptualizes humans as 'matter') does not allow us to comprehend the infinite, that is God, which creates a 'mystery': "[t]he ubiquitous absence of 'God' in ordinary life is this sense of non-existing, of mystery, of incalculable potentiality; this eternal doubt that hovers between the thing in itself and our perception of it; this dimension in and by which all other dimensions exist. The white paper that contains a drawing; the space that contains a building" (27). Thus, Fowles does not exclude God from existence the way Sartre does but he makes Him part of what humans cannot know. He sees Him the way he sees the afterlife in the next chapter, as a 'Bet Situation'.

Mystery is an advantage in the sense that it is 'energy'. If it is to be decoded, the source of energy is gone. Then, the nothingness Fowles speaks of is what humans are capable of understanding without losing energy. It is limited knowledge he is promoting here rather than limited abilities at attaining knowledge. The writer in here is contradicting himself. First, he speaks of the human's limited capacities at attaining knowledge; then, he argues that the human should stop questioning at one point because mystery is necessary to have energy. God

cannot be understood because He is infinite and we are finite, yet He should not be understood because of the importance of mystery in human existence.

Another relevant concept to God Fowles discusses in this book is the afterlife. Fowles assumes that believing in an afterlife is believing in a bet. He conceptualizes it as the 'Bet Situation'. He compares the situation with a horse race. We have, according to him, two winning horses and three choices: to bet for horse number one and choose to believe in the afterlife, to bet for horse number two and accept a mortal's life of extinction, or to not bet at all and remain agnostic. The first who made the analogy is Pascal and the best option to him is the first since there is nothing to lose in the choice. To Fowles it is bad enough that the world has fueled its engine on the oil of such a myth for too long for "now the oil-level is dropping ominously low" (31). The choice of remaining agnostic is not enough. It is a must to bet on the other horse and choose this life which "is ended by a total extinction of consciousness as well as body" (31). Injustice and inequality are to be solved rather than to be surrendered to thinking that there would come a day where all things would be set right; the individual, when giving attention to the world of the now and excluding the possibility of a promised land, would do his best to amend the ills of the world he lives in. Fowles see that betting on the second horse is a moral obligation for the modern man.

It is the second choice that makes our experiences more pleasurable, for "pleasure is the product of death; not an escape from it" (32). The possibility of an afterlife would make of suicide a virtue. Its impossibility makes authenticity possible. Fowles claims that the twentieth century has witnessed a quick increase in interest in pleasure. He believes the reason is not just because of the disbelief in the afterlife, but because of the reality of death with all what's disadvantageous in the technologies the century produced. (34) However, this hedonistic approach has been long abandoned by philosophers of ethics simply because it promotes immorality. While Sartre stresses an obligation towards ourselves to live an

authentic life because there is nothing that has real value, Fowles takes the twentieth century as an evidence of a historical context in which Man had lived in the best ways in terms of pleasure approximation. We think that this is true simply because, as many modern thinkers assert, man is simply lost, not happy. To say that death approximates indulgence in pleasure is something but to say that the twentieth century is an evidence for that is something else. Coming to this problematic, created by the reader while beginning to read *The Aristos*, Fowles comes to focus on what type of pleasure he is talking about here. What Fowles is preaching here is not a morality; it is rather a reality. He thus clarifies this in his chapter, “The Obsession with Money”, when he says, “having, not being, governs our time” (124). This morality of having characterizes the inauthentic rather the authentic, as we shall discover in the coming chapter.

In a society where humans no longer believe in God and in the afterlife, the now is the only possible heaven. The result is the ‘monetization of pleasure’, which means:

The inability to conceive of pleasure except as being in some way connected with getting and spending. The invisible patina on an object is now its value, not its true intrinsic beauty. An experience is now something that has to be possessed as an object bought can be possessed; and even other human beings, husbands, wives, mistresses, lovers, children, friends, come to be possessed or unpossessed objects associated with values derived more from the world of money than from the world of humanity. (128)

According to Fowles, this habit comes also from the utilitarian and capitalist ideologies that have long monopolized the world. Security lies in having possessions, not in the quality of what one possesses. The experience is evidence of a certain value to our existence. All what is immaterial is worthless since moral acts were our ‘tickets’ to Heaven. Our societies and the necessity to market instant pleasures prevented the reality of ‘full

being'. The main reason behind these robotic attitudes, as Fowles sees, is the education that the governmental systems have instilled in humans, an education that "has everywhere surrendered to economic need" (141). The right alternative to this education is an education that is universal in terms of uniting humanity together rather than dividing it to isolated tribes with different languages and rites.

Another side effect of existing in the now and accepting that life is passing on the raft is anxiety. Fowles' anxiety maintains the same conception of Sartre's; however, Fowles divides it into two types: universal (which is common to all humanity) and individual (which is personal), yet both "are tensions between a pole in our real life and a counterpole in the life we imagine we would like to lead" (41). The most important thing to Fowles is the source of these anxieties. He relates them to "a supreme form of anguish: that of the nemo" (47). The 'nemo' is a very important concept in our research because Fowles creates his character's complexities based on it.

Existentialists believe that there is nothing that determines humans. Man is free from all natural or unnatural constraints. Sartre sees nature and the conscious mind as limitations of the possibility of an absolute freedom that the human being is capable of. Fowles, on the other hand, argues that evolution is necessary for survival. He believes that if it weren't for hazard, humans could not evolve, even if hazard creates unhappiness and inequality at some point (42). In addition to nature, the human unconscious desires, most importantly sexuality and security, form another element recognized by Fowles as a real element hindering human freedom. Freud's division of the human psyche into three important parts (the superego, the ego, and the id) is acknowledged, yet Fowles forces an essential addition, which is the nemo (borrowed from Freudian terminology).

The nemo is the anti-ego; it is the state of "nobodiness" (47). Fowles sees that the nemo is more important than other components that control the psyche, although it has

received less attention. What has lessened its importance to psychologists is that it has not been with Man as long as other primitive desires have. Nevertheless, sexual desires and security are not proper to humans only, but to all other living beings. The nemo, alternatively, started to exist with the existence of human civilization, not with the human existence: “the nemo is a specifically human psychic force; a function of civilization, of communication, of the uniquely human ability to compare and hypothesize. Moreover, it is a negative force. We are not, as in the cases of sexual desire and security, attracted towards it; but repelled from it” (48). The nemo is, according to Fowles, ‘an enemy’ that has always been fought against by its holder because it reminds Man of his own nothingness. It is the acknowledging of a human vulnerability and relativism by the human. It is a great force within that believes that “all of us are failures; we all die” (49). Fowles considers love and hatred as a human necessity to defy the nemo. We have to be either loved or hated to be remembered and continue to exist, to be a ‘somebody’. In addition to love and hatred, there is fame, envy, jealousy, and desire. Creating God and the afterlife is also a way of defying the nemo, our own sense of our worthlessness.

There are two ways to overcome the nemo according to Fowles: to conform or to conflict. To conform is to prove oneself in the society one lives in, to abide by the law, to be a ‘somebody’ according to the group. This would lead to success; success would prove that one is not a failure, not a ‘nothing’. One advantage “is that it puts a man in a situation where part of the blame for failure can always be put on the group” (50). To conflict is to adhere to “a special style of life”, to stand out from the crowd by creating an individual persona, to be the outsider. The latter is also a characteristic of the modern art, dandiness of style over content; the search for an exceptional style leads to a “coupling of exoticism of presentation with banality of theme” (50).

What is ‘new’ is not necessarily authentic in arts because putting more focus to form and neglecting content creates an evil in the form of “a jungle of pastiche” which “grows each

work or artist that is felt to be genuinely ‘creative’” (51). He believes that this obsession of creating an individual persona is an obsession of killing the nemo. Every art that experiments is an act of fear of losing one’s individuality. The people who defeat the nemo are always more admired, even if their humanity is not apparent. They do it to be remembered.

An alternative solution to fight the nemo is to make peace with it since it is, like the ego, important to the existence of man, reminding him of inequality. It is the recognition of the horror of the finite nature of man and his insignificance and at the same time it gives the energy that man needs when trying to remedy it. Fowles explains that it “is an evolutionary force, as necessary as the ego. The ego is certainty, what I am; the nemo is potentiality, what I am not. But instead of utilizing the nemo as we would utilize any other force, we allow ourselves to be terrified by it, as primitive man was terrified by lightning. We run screaming from this mysterious shape in the middle of our town” (57-8). This terror does not lie “in itself, but in our terror at it” (57-8). The key to survive it lies in avoiding reaction. Reaction is allowing oneself to be defined by that force; that is we should neither conform nor conflict.

Fowles goes further to analyze this gap, the human dissatisfaction, by tracing the reasons and finding solutions. According to him, there is a traditional approach to overcome it which is to look to those beneath us; in every ladder (whether social or individual), there is always someone beneath whose condition is worse. This is the only possibility for “a mysterious balance and equality among all forms of animate matter” which Fowles terms as “relativity of recompense” (59). Among these forms of ‘animate matter’, there is only one exception, which is Man. The fact that all ages, present, past, or future, experience pleasure and pain equally but immeasurably with other ages cannot be grasped by Man because, first, he is, unlike other living beings, conscious. Man constantly compares his age to other ages and himself to other people. Second, capitalism, along with modern and material notions of happiness and the culture of possessions, is what forbid Man from living in a world balanced

with other worlds with relativity of recompense. Man keeps on measuring the amounts of inequality. What Fowles focuses on in this chapter, “The Relativity of Recompense”, is, as we stressed previously and as he does in his early chapters, the reality of man’s condition in the modern world, not how man should act and be, not yet the ‘Aristos’.<sup>9</sup> The modern man is a man who measures inequality by two concepts: happiness and envy.

Happiness and envy are the most prominent conditions to guide our behavior, as they have existed with the existence of man. Happiness is to have the means for a secure life; envy is the deficiency of these means. However, to achieve happiness, one needs to experience envy. While happiness is important to extend life, envy is imperative to change it. Envy causes progress and is an essential element to evolution. Happiness is the evidence of the worth of survival. Fowles defines happiness as ‘anti-social’, for it “implies a comparison, a knowing that others could be, but are not, enjoying the particular happiness that we enjoy” (63). Thus, if we are not envied, we are not happy; when happiness is available to all, it leads to unhappiness. This has created a long-lasting tension between the masses and the privileged, and capitalism and communism have further deformed the conception of happiness and related it to materialism, widening the gap between people and making happiness corrupt. The solution, according to Fowles, lies in reconstructing “the relativity of recompense of our pre-conscious past; to isolate the virtues of both envy and happiness, to take the destructive aggression from the one and the destructive selfishness from the other, and to get them to interact. Above all, it is to establish this by science and reason and charity, and not by emotion, blood and blackmail” (66). However, Man cannot do without emotion, for reason has been long reasoned against as lacking and relative. And so remedy is impossible, according to the solution proposed by Fowles, or at least absolute remedy is.

Another problem that generates dissatisfaction is the indication of a freedom of will. Fowles argues that we are put in another Bet Situation in here; we either have no freedom of

will, or we must bet that we do have “some sort of freedom,” or “make no bet and remain agnostic” (67). Fowles is aware that absolute freedom is illogical, yet he argues for the possibility present to humans for a relative freedom. He believes that every individual is hostile towards the other’s opinions and beliefs and that is a proof for “a greater general freedom” (69). This is reminiscent of the Cartesian ‘cogito, ergo sum’, the only guaranteed freedom available to man. However, unlike the Cartesian ‘I’, the Fowlesean is independent yet defined by its opposites; the existence of the other is vital in the existence of the self.

Fowles also comments on other philosophies, stating that all philosophies “are approximations: these approximations form a humus from which better approximations grow” (102). In here Fowles, is claiming that each new philosophy is necessarily better than the former ones. The claim is supported by Ernst March’s idea of knowledge as never true or false but “biologically and evolutionally useful” (102). Thus, new knowledge is, not better than the former, but more useful to its time. We can imagine what kind of philosophies Fowles is trying to condemn in here. The first is Christianity. According to Fowles, in spite of the rewards brought by Christianity to humanity, it would never be suitable to the modern environment we live in. It was once important for the survival of humanity, yet every dogma is a reaction to a certain situation, and our situation calls for a different dogma. There is no evidence of the supernatural nature of the life of Jesus as there is no evidence for “any remote historical event” (103). What is required is a leap of faith, as argued by Kierkegaard, beyond logic. Fowles refuses to take the leap because it contradicts all scientific belief and logic, and, most importantly, the leap itself is “an existential betrayal and blasphemy” (103). Fowles is not giving us any new argument here but that of reason, an argument that was given centuries ago. This is contradictory to his own version of authenticity and individualism.

There is only one situation in which Christianity becomes appealing; it is only when all what is supernatural is to be believed metaphorical:

I could believe in the Virgin Birth (that the whole of evolution, of whatever is the case, fathers each child); in the Resurrection (for Jesus has risen again in men's minds); in the Miracles (because we should all like to perform such generous acts); in the Divinity of Christ and in Transubstantiation (we are all complementary one to another, and all to 'God'); I could believe in all these things that at present excommunicate my reason. But traditional Christians would call this lack of faith. (105)

What Fowles criticizes the most in the Christian doctrines is not Jesus but the church. He believes that Jesus is a victim of the church. Theologians have imprisoned Jesus by making him reproachable only through the church. What makes the bible less plausible is how the church claims that it has absolute truth, and, according to Fowles, this claim pronounces its 'death sentence' for there is no absolute truth.

It is the necessity of having a religion that led men to create other religions that are more plausible (as supposed to polytheistic religions) the way modern philosophy was necessary to replace positivism and the claim for perfect entities of truth and reality. Christianity's failing is also in particularizing mystery. Mystery is always an advantage according to Fowles and an important constituent of reality, yet Christianity promotes a mystery that has nothing to do with the truth and it is "only to the truth that mystery has power" (108). However, its survival is due to men's hunger for mystery and goodness.

Fowles also criticizes other philosophies like humanism, socialism, and fascism. His argument is that a good society is one in which humans are not to conform without questioning why they are conforming, "in which no one obeys without considering why he is obeying; and in which no one conforms out of fear or laziness" (121). All mentioned philosophies are, according to Fowles, fascist in nature since their aim is to impose conformity. He believes that even socialism, although its aims seem otherwise, promotes a

hostile society by giving power to the Many. What the Many needs instead is education.

Existentialism is the philosophy Fowles celebrates as the antidote to fascism.

Existentialism is the politics of freedom. It promotes the need to revolt against all organized systems of philosophy, politics, and psychology. The aim of existentialism is to preserve the uniqueness and individuality of Man. Existentialism, unlike other philosophies that seek knowledge as a way to find comfort, shocks the individual into accepting anxiety as the only way for knowledge. It is the only philosophy that tries “to combat the ubiquitous and increasingly dangerous sense of the nemo in modern man” (122). What is usually misinterpreted by critics of existentialism is that existentialism is a way to avoid social responsibility. What existentialism rejects is not a revolt against authority; it is a revolt against moral and social codes that have no clear justification but that of tradition. Of course this claim is Fowles’s, not of modern existentialists like Sartre and Camus. What we have seen in the former section devalues this argument. What is interesting about Fowles’s argument is that he believes that the first existentialist is not Kierkegaard but Socrates. However, Fowles does not give further arguments to support his claim. Many of his notes are not well supported by further arguments and this is one. We think that Socrates’ approach is more skeptical than existential. He always argues that he knows nothing and what makes of his style unique is that he asks more questions than finding answers to those questions; existentialists, on the other hand, have an obsession about finding an answer to every single question. The existentialist is a god. He is free and undefeatable. What Fowles admires in here, especially with his appeal to mystery, is not existentialism; it is rather skepticism, and every philosophy has skepticism at its heart. Fowles has already argued that every philosophy and new religion is a revolution against the former. His Aristos is a rational skeptic rather than an existential god.

Nevertheless, we will further judge this in analyzing his fiction. The philosophy he provides is

unsystematic and undeveloped. The excuse behind this is probably an attempt at being authentic.

One of the most important discussions by Fowles is the importance of art. Fowles, first, makes the difference between art and science. He argues that although both are an abstraction of reality, science cuts the self of the scientist from that of its work; the artist, on the other hand, embodies his art. That is the main reason why art cannot be categorized. We cannot classify art into categories through history and contain it into a label similar to that of science. Fowles calls this categorization, so common to our age, the 'scientization of art'. This does not allow art its most important component, mystery. He does not undermine the usefulness of scientific criticism of art, but he disagrees with the idea that "art is a pseudo-science" (153). Art cannot be wholly knowable the way a product of science can. A good work of art celebrates a freedom that challenges any systemized dogmas. What cannot categorize it is that freedom of expression.

Art is closer to reality than science for the reason that it is less, if not at all, dominated by the rational and logic. It thus excels at expressions of freedom. Art is also the best "medium of communication between human beings" because of its complexity, richness, and openness to mystery (184). It is also, according to Fowles, what best defeats the *nemo* since it is timeless and immortal. Art is the best evidence that others have existed as 'somebodies' and "still exist in this creation of their existence" (185). An artifact, unlike 'scientifact', cannot be proved wrong or right later in time. It is neither right nor wrong. It does not require immediate utility. Its value cannot change with evolution. It survives time and place. And thus it communicates history. Time becomes a necessary dynamic in its aesthetic value. The beauty of a work of art lies in its power to communicate through history. The older the work of art, the more valuable it is. This makes time or the possibility of the survival of a work of art a necessary standard in judging the value of a new work of art. If a work is ready to survive

time, then it is a good work. If not, then it is a bad work. A good art also generalizes and particularizes. It generalizes the universal condition of humanity through time as it particularizes a certain condition relevant only to that specific time; a good art holds a balance that guarantees its survival by conveying the generalizing aspect and communicates a particular one to the future surviving man. It is both “unique and universal” (188). This makes the receiver aware of both elements which enrich his self.

Another interesting aspect Fowles speaks of that we see as quite interesting, and it is clear that his discussion of art is less tedious than other discussions in his book, is the relation of the artist to his art. There are three main aims behind the creation of a work of art: to describe the world outside, to describe his feelings about this world, and to describe his feelings towards himself. In the past, art had a representational aspect. The lack of technical tools made art possess a special stylizing feature. The resulting feature creates another function in addition to the representational one; it, most ironically, creates magic, distancing art from reality “at the same time as it was invoked” (190). The question is: is the artist aware of creating that magic, Fowles also calls stylization, or does it come accidentally? By distorting reality, stylization gives rise to individualism, which is an aim that steps from mere objective descriptions of reality. It rather satisfies the last two aims: a projection of the artist’s feelings towards reality and about himself. However, for post-modern artists, distortion and stylizations became an end in themselves not a result of representation. Thus, are we to call postmodern artists real artists or not? Or should we add another aim to Fowles’ categorization which we might label or, to put it more honestly and less ironically, might borrow the label ‘exhausting form’. However, Fowles puts those artists in the last category; they express their feelings about themselves in the form of abstractionism. We disagree with Fowles in here; these artists do not express feelings because expressing feelings is still a mode of representation. These artists isolate art from reality; they are aware of the process of creating

art. In here, feelings are no longer involved; awareness is. Art in this case approximates to science.

If Fowles misplaces the aim, he is still against a selfish art where the artist has only individualism as an end. He believes that there must be other selfless ends to art where it serves higher aims; one important aim is communication. In here the artist is excluding the audience. And the message of the artist is aloof and unreachable. Fowles believes that as a result of this limitation two distinctive camps of artists have emerged: “one of artists who pursue their own feelings and their own self-satisfaction and who expect their audiences to come to them out of a sense of duty toward ‘pure’ or ‘sincere’ art” and another category “of artists who exploit the desire of the audience to be wooed, amused and entertained. There is nothing new in this situation. But the camps have never been so clearly defined and so antagonistic” (193-4).

It's obvious that Fowles is criticizing art in his time. This would give us a clear idea of what kind of art he sees as authentic and would facilitate the answer to one of our main questions, that of whether his art is authentic or not. In the passage above, Fowles thinks that his contemporary artists fall in either of the two camps, the selfish individualistic and the popular shallow; that is the one whose aim is to exhaust form in the sake of attaining the new in the mission of the authentic and the one whose aim is to simply sell. A real authentic artist, thus, falls in neither of the categories. The real artist fulfills the three mentioned aims above. With the change of time, the representations change, leaving one art different from the other, yet making it universal with its consistency to fulfill these aims. Fowles criticizes the first camp severely since it is the camp that is highly celebrated by society. Everyone admires the life of a bohemian whose aim is to survive the nemo. Neglecting content in the sake of exhausting form is not a true function of art according to Fowles.

Genius is what traditionally drove artists to create great art and to differentiate them from craftsmen. Beethoven, Goethe, and Napoleon are examples of such display of genius. This is what modern artists are trying to imitate by creating new techniques and forms to differentiate them from the artisan. They are geniuses to the public as well, yet the public usually “take[s] artists at their own valuation” (201). What the imitation neglects here is the aim of the genius is not only to create new techniques and modes of representation for the sake of individualism; it is to create some new content. The form is the dress in which the content has been created in. The form is a result rather than an aim in itself. These great artists of the past who have defeated the nemo had revolutionary ideas that were necessarily expressed in new forms. The modern artist is rather more obsessed with the idea of being a genius. This has led the artist to another misleading notion: “that the style is the man” (202). Every artist discovers a distinctive technique which distinguishes his style from other artists and makes him more recognized. He makes his work possess the same style to create a personal signature. Fowles does not see this as inappropriate but the artist in here is rather focused on making his art recognizable than authentic. There must be a balance. The subsection that deals with this issue is entitled “The Style is Not the Man”. Fowles does not provide a discussion of how to achieve that balance, but it is obvious that if the artist remembers to achieve all the aims needed to create art, he would create something original. In fact, that this is how we are to judge him later when we deal with his novels.

Fowles arrives at last to discussing the meaning of the ‘aristos’, the ideal individual, or to put it in his words, “the best for our situation at this time” (212). The equivalent of the aristos is the same as the existential authentic man Sartre promotes. However, as we have indicated before, his work, and his conception of the aristos, is not only inspired by the existential thoughts of Sartre. The work is also highly inspired by Heraclitus’s “proto-

existential ideas” (Salami 254). Heraclitus is seen by Fowles as the philosopher most responsible for all modern ideas and doctrines:

How Heraclitus saw mankind divided into a moral and intellectual elite (the *aristoi*, the good ones, not—this is a later sense—the ones of noble birth) and an unthinking, conforming mass—*hoi polloi*, the many. Anyone can see how such a distinction plays into the hands of all those subsequent thinkers who have advanced theories of the master-race, the superman, government by the few or by the one, and the rest. (9)

The ‘Few’ (the *aristoi*) and the ‘Many’ (*hoi polloi*) are originated in Heraclitus’s division of a society. However, while Heraclitus sees the Few and the Many as two independent collective entities of society, Fowles sees them as also part of the individual himself. That is the Many and the Few are part of every individual: “the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals” (10). Fowles sees that the struggle of the individual to achieve the *aristos* is a struggle within; that is a struggle to find the Few within himself. He insists that the *aristos* finds himself within the Many but he refuses membership. He does not belong to any organization whatsoever, even an organization of the Few, of the elect. He does not conform to any force. His freedom is his only religion (212). This is a reminder of Nietzsche’s overman if it were not for Fowles’s belief that conformity must come with some inward education. If the *aristos* conforms, he conforms with freedom and after knowledge of himself, of what he feels and thinks (176). It is, however, still vague how this knowledge is to be attained. Fowles offers solutions with no clear systematic dogmas. Hopefully, his novels would offer more than philosophical abstractions.

Hence, the Few in society can also turn into the Many; history teaches the *aristos* to know that every elite can turn into “a mere oligarchy” (213). Fowles’s *aristos* accepts his

isolation, his suffering, and his inevitable death, “but he does not accept that evolution cannot be controlled and its dangers limited” (123). The question is how can an isolated creature manage to control, on his own, such supreme and destructive power as evolution? A possible answer lies in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, Fowles’s historical novel that deals with the survival of the authentic Man and the limitations of evolution. This question is to be dealt with in the third chapter.

Fowles’s aristos, like Fowles himself, only knows. Fowles starts almost all his notes in page 213 by ‘he knows’. What the aristos knows is what’s in Fowles book, his philosophical notes. What I rather wanted to read is what he is rather than what he knows. What would be more useful to the reader who would maybe want to be this being is not the knowledge that he must have but the person he must be. We already have a long history of philosophies dictating what one needs to know. Fowles is rather dictating certain knowledge on the individual here. That is ironic since he is trying also to divert the individual from accepting imposed doctrines.

In addition to *The Aristos*, there are other philosophical works written by the author that convey imperative themes to our research. Since *The Aristos* is the bible to which our writer, and many researchers, relies on, especially when designing his novels, we have only focused on it in this chapter. We will refer to his other works in the next chapters.

As we argued at the end of the first section, we cannot judge *The Aristos* as authentic or not since it carries personal statements of values, but Fowles does judge, even if he reasons against holding judgments. According to him, authenticity requires ‘deategorization’ and all what he does in his work is categorizing religions, people, artists, and philosophies, sometimes not even according to what he believes but to what other philosophers before him do. One cannot help but feel certain superiority in his opinions, superiority that is not well deserved since most of his personal opinions are exhausted fragments from other thinkers.

Nevertheless, his fiction is to be relatively spared of his own judgment and thrown into ours, since art belongs to both the artist and its audience.

### 1.3. Surviving the ‘Nemo’ Versus Exhausting ‘Making it New’

We have already stated in the first section when trying to analyze Kierkegaard’s life that authenticity can only be concretely perceived in a work of art. The reason lies in that we cannot wholly know if a philosopher or any other real person in the real world has lived an authentic life or not; he is the only one who is capable of answering that dilemma. A work of art does not belong to its creator only. It belongs to its audience as well. To Fowles, an authentic art is that that defies the nemo by surviving time, simply because it communicates with every individual through time. It shows that the human condition is universal and timeless. There is a balance in it where form and content make a harmonious interaction. Thus, Fowles does not exactly label a certain category of arts that belongs to a certain time. He does not see art as modernist or postmodernist. Is the label not a way of categorizing art, which rids its individualistic value, the only value that differentiates it from other disciplines? If the artist is aware of creating his work according to a certain category, does that make his art enslaved by that label and, thus, less authentic? These questions are to be answered in this section. The aim behind this particular part of the research is to see if Fowles’s fiction, if it falls into one of the categories, is authentic or not. Since his art might fall into one of the categories, it is vital to go through every category that advocates an authentic art. One of these categories is modernist art. We shall see if there are some artists in every label whose art survived the categorization.

‘Making it new’ is an existential statement pronounced by the American poet Ezra Pound which defines modernist art. The modernist is an artist who is aware of creating new forms and breaking up with the traditions of established modes of representations. One of the main philosophies behind the emergence of the movement is Nietzsche’s nihilism. Other important

ideologies that influenced the movement are relativism and psychoanalysis for reasons we will deal with shortly.

The movement, Paul Poplawski argues, cannot be defined since “the name itself remains radically unstable, shifting in meaning according to who uses it, when, where and in what context” (VIII). The reason lies in its revolutionary origins; the industrialized post-Victorian modern era lived a period of moral transition. Nietzsche’s nihilism has changed the way the artist perceives reality. The human conscious has become more skeptical about its mode of representation. Subjectivity is the only religion practiced by the modern artist who is no longer willing to describe reality as it is. He finds in positivism certain hypocrisy, for, ironically, it does not portray a realistic depiction of the human nature. The crisis of belief, loss of faith, and the disintegration of universal morality and culture have, along with the rise of relativist knowledge, created a rather pessimistic and solipsistic mode of representation.

The mode of representation is not radically changed from realism to modernism. Naturalist literature is a pave way to subjectivity since it is based on the philosophy that actions and human fate are a result of external and internal uncontrollable forces of nature. Charles Darwin’s work was another declaration of the death of God. This reinforcement encouraged the secularism that was already instilled in the beliefs of many scientists and artists at that time. In literature, modernists construct characters that are less spiritual and exceptional in favor of plainer and even fragile characters. One can easily assume that the concept of the ‘anti-hero’ is partly created out of the Darwinist belief that humans are a minor part of an animal kingdom that depends on survival to secure its place. Prufrock in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, for instance, is a physically and morally defeated character who emphasizes his own insignificance in a world he fails to survive in. T. S. Eliot, like many other modernist writers, struggles to reestablish meaning through finding ‘new’, yet authentic, ways of representation. By authentic, we mean embodying that balance Fowles admires

because Prufrock is still a citizen of the world and many readers relate to his dilemma of adapting to it.

The psychoanalyst, Sigmund Freud, has strongly reinforced this idea of human inevitable determinist nature by claiming that what is uncontrollable by a human being over himself is larger than what is controllable. Freud's revolutionary theory about the human psyche in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century has defined modern ideology and arts. According to him, the mind has three levels. In creating a topographic model of the mind, comparing it to an iceberg, Freud explains the different structures and functions of the levels of the mind which are three: conscious, subconscious, and unconscious. The conscious is seen to be the tip of the iceberg which floats above the water and thus it is that part of the mind that the human has access to. It is the smallest piece of the iceberg which shows that what a human has absolute access to is but a small segment of the mind. It represents the least minimum amount of mental activity that we are aware of: thoughts and perceptions. The subconscious, also called preconscious, is that part of the psyche represented in the middle just beneath the water which is that fraction of the mind consisting of retrievable memories and stored knowledge; it is "the gray area between consciousness and unconsciousness"; a human being can have access to this part of the mind whose drives and their existence "we know but refuse to acknowledge" (De Berg 29). The part the human is absolutely unaware of is the unconscious. It lies deep down in the water and it is the greatest part of the iceberg because it is the most important element in the psyche. It controls one's behavior and defines one's personality. Most of human acts are guided by this part of the mind because it hides all desired wishes and repressed feelings and experiences that are derived from instincts, immoral tendencies, or childhood traumatic experiences that the human being at one time refuses to acknowledge and so they get buried in the darkest part of the mind. This particular part of the mind is the source that is responsible for the emotional and mental stability of the human being. Of course Freud offers methods to

have access to this particular part when there is no stability like hypnotherapy and psychoanalysis, focusing on free association and interpretation of the unconscious.

Psychoanalysis and naturalism, like relativism in science with Einstein's new ideas, together with nihilism, have changed how the artist views reality. WWI has also contributed in diverting the attention of the artist from society to the self. The war has brought nothing but desperation, disillusionment, and more skepticism about unity; art has become more individualistic, for the modern artist's skeptical views about absolute truths and unity destroyed every connection to traditional modes of representation. Art has become a real journey to self-discovery for the artists and his characters. Modernism is an incarnation of such a journey taken by the artist: that is to annihilate traditions and create something 'authentic', which means 'new' (according to the modernists). The components of 'new' are ultimate results of skepticism. These components are both thematic and structural.

Modernist literature's most prevailing themes are: alienation, loss, despair, and disorder. Most themes tell the experience of the individual rather than society. While the realist writer focuses on reshaping society through reshaping the individual, the modernist writer expresses despair and loss because he does not see a home for the restless and skeptical individual self in the same society, and so alienation is a result of this new conflict the writer and the modern character go through. Alienation is also a result of the new urban life the modern individual has found himself living in; Peter Brooker argues that alienation is at most "the characteristic condition of urban living in modern metropolis. The impersonality of modern technologies, the speed of new transport and the increased size of the city crowds were seen to create a disorienting double effect of proximity and isolation" (8). Eliot's *Prufrock* is again a perfect illustration of how the urban metropolis accentuates his sense of alienation. The modernist poet uses in the poem images of a "yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes" (1: line 15) and a "soot that falls from chimneys" (19), in addition to 'narrow streets', 'pipes', and

'dooryards'. The urban life makes Prufrock uneasy and adds to his anxiety and fear to approach the modern woman of the newly formed society. Alienation is not a 'new' theme in literature but the light under which it is dealt with is 'new' since one of the reasons of it is urbanization. Eliot excels at creating a literary masterwork that is pieced up from different allusions in the intention of redefining a new artistic form. Any reader from any age who lives in the modern world can relate to the anguish the intellectual autistic Prufrock is living. The poem survives more than a century now which makes it authentic according to Fowles' definition, since it tells the timeless condition of human nature.

Alienation comes also from existential anguish and the need to find oneself in the disordered nihilistic world. That is it comes from the loss of the individual and the rootless condition of his self-identification. Modernist writers tell the story of existential experiences the modern man goes through in which he tries to redefine himself, yet he usually does not succeed at accomplishing this goal due to his discovery that everything around can remain meaningless. The modern character does no longer correspond to the conception of a traditional hero. He is conceptualized by modernist theorists as an 'anti-hero'. Jesse Matz compares: "in the larger scheme of things, there is a long and steep descent from the epic heroes of myth and legend to the *anti-heroes* of modern fiction. The former were far better than average, superior to their environments, and destined for triumph; the latter are weak, disaffected, and passive, undone by circumstances, and lucky to make it through at all" (45). The modern anti-hero seems repulsive even, yet not to a modern reader because this weakness stems from a lack of action towards a world he is skeptical about.

The modern character is an over-thinker and a dweller of his own consciousness, the only vessel of his own existence. The external world holds no space for a home to him. His alienation adds to his passivity. Harold Kaplan believes that the physical passivity of the modern character is a result of the fact that "we know so much that we are suspicious of what

we know, and are forced to condition thought with so much criticism that it has become clear that a large part of our thinking is essentially after-thought, or thought about thought” (4-5). Introspection has become more significant than action; characters tend to analyze situations without taking any definite decisions because they find no absolute or valid knowledge to act upon. Modern characters do not have the motivation to act, for their motivation to interact with the world has no value since the absolute morals that used to hold the world together have collapsed. Modern characters “become a question of the strange processes of consciousness, the unclear boundaries of the self, the vagaries of human perception. No certainties could say what constitutes character... its foundations – in heroism, stereotype, virtue, social norms – were attacked, too, and replaced by uncertainties more true to modern experience” (Matz 45). The only virtue owned by the anti-hero is honesty. Modern characters are honest about their weaknesses and imperfections: “In short, I was afraid” (Eliot Line 86). Fear is another major theme in modernist fiction, mostly the fear of death; religion in the past had stable values and answers of human fate. Modern skepticism has replaced constitutional religions resulting in a fatal fear of death in modern Men.

The modern anti-hero is not just the result of the new philosophical skepticism; it is also a result of an intentional break from tradition where the modern artist is to challenge established modes of representation, or, as Fowles would conceptualize it, to ‘decategorize’ art from former rigid definitions and make it ‘authentic’. Thus, the anti-hero is an attempt at making art more authentic by making characters surpass inauthentic social roles of the herd and find the overman within:

Many modern novels are filled with characters existing on the outskirts of their society, characters who reject positions of social importance, who ignore the precepts of conventional morality, and who scoff at the traditional heroic postures. This also suggests the reason why in many modern novels the

characters who hold the conventionally important public positions – the generals, priests, ministers, doctors, psychiatrists, government officials, and in general the leaders of society – often turn out in the end to be despicable characters lacking any true sense of morality and justice, any real importance on the personal or familial level, and any real heroism. (J. Arthur Honeywell 35)

That shows that there is a certain heroic feature in the anti-hero which is existential authenticity. The modern anti-hero is an existentialist whose sole purpose in life is to find who he truly is by being honest with himself throughout that quest. The modern protagonist is an everyday man with everyday problems; he is unconventional, uninteresting, plain, passive, and, at times, immoral (according to conventional morality).

Another illustration of a modern anti-hero is James Joyce's Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses* (1922). Bloom is exiled by the society he lives in because of his Jewish roots. Although he tries hard to fit in, the proud and orthodox Irish society does not accept him. He converts to Catholicism in order to marry Molly. His conversion is another way to fit in the society that still rejects him. He does not act when his wife cheats on him. However, he is still someone to admire due to his honesty with himself. Joyce uses the technique of stream of consciousness (that we will come to discuss shortly) to draw the world within the character. That world is the most important world according to the modern artist, since it gives a truthful and authentic glimpse of the human character other than its disguise. Actions expose a disguise, a social role that is constrained by some social standards, while consciousness exposes a more truthful image of oneself. Accordingly, the modern anti-hero is more authentic since its creation survives time.<sup>10</sup> Bloom represents every modern reader. We are all exiled; we are immoral; and we are just honest with ourselves. Matz sees that artists create such characters with such "passivity, weakness, and failure [because] these traits come to seem more truly heroic, in a

way, than classic heroic ones, because they showed people shouldering the stranger burden of modern futility” (49). This form of heroism necessitates exile. The latter is celebrated in modern fiction by characters, like their creators, who lack communication with the virtual world, sometimes in extreme manners like Septimus Smith in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

Madness is another virtue in the case of Septimus and many modernist characters. Septimus suffers from shell-shocks and constantly has visions that are quite surreal and detached from the real life he is living. These visions reveal some truths and add some ‘new’ aesthetic character to the novel. The story becomes somewhat confusing, yet the reader lives within the subjective experience of the character and has a glimpse of the genius in the madness. Since the truth is the ultimate goal and an alternative for morality, madness is celebrated in modern fiction. Septimus is seen as a hero that reveals a hidden truth through his visions. The character is inspired from the writer’s own experience with madness. Virginia Woolf has been described as a ‘mad genius’. Her fiction is fragmented with multiple visions and pieced up modernist techniques that are spontaneously harmonious. They show no trace of the effortful playfulness some authors sometimes impose because hers come from her mind’s already fragmented perspective. The techniques she uses are a result of her madness. One can see where Gertrude Stein, who is rather a great editor and reader of modernist fiction, fails here. Her techniques are forced and they reflect nothing but themselves. There is no truthful human experience in her work which creates an impossibility to survive time and reach out to other individuals through time. Woolf’s work is authentic while Stein’s is not, even though both works experiment, whether consciously or unconsciously.

The modern anti-hero is also unable to word love since he does not go beyond the self. His inability springs from his physical exile. The lack of communication with the world hinders the individual to use a more common language. Instead, he uses other ways that show

this struggle like Richard Dalloway in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Richards offers his wife some flowers instead of expressing his love linguistically. In many modernist novels, expressing love linguistically comes as either fake, like in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, or non-verbal. Sometimes even gestures are absent since love as a theme is meant to be absent or frustrating to the modern individual, which was the reality at that time since faith in human relationships was compared to faith in God. The artist trusts and believes in the truth apparent to the self and nothing more. This subjective truth is what constitutes the modernist novel.

While the anti-hero is one result of that truth, another more significant result defines the first-rate modernist novel, which is 'stream of consciousness'. The concept refers to a mode of narrative that is quite innovative; modernist writers employ this technique to represent the mental experience of their characters. Language, according to them, must have a role in defining that flow of chaotic thought the human experiences. By using stream of consciousness, the author depicts every single segment of the mind, neglecting neither thoughts nor feelings. The concept was first coined by the American psychologist William James in his *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). He defines the human mind as lacking the reasonable and absolute. He further stresses the skeptical account of Freud by stating that the mental life, as Matz puts it in "The Novel", is "more chaotic, unreasonable, atavistic, and divided than people have suspected. Whereas common sense might have had faith in the mind ruled by reason and deliberate intentions, modern psychology made it ever more clear that it was but a flux of sensations and perceptions" which are "ruled ... by unconscious desires not always available to conscious awareness" (220). The rational does not play a major role in the human mind. It is rather determined by inner desires, feelings, and subjective perceptions of the world.

These hectic episodes instigate a flow of thought that cannot be, if exposed to another person, wholly interpreted. That is the reason why modern novels that use this technique are

hard to comprehend by the reader. It offers the reader a hint of the complexity of the reality of the human mind. Plus, its aim is to show that there is nothing that can be absolutely perceived even within the mind of the perceiver since, as dealt with before, the psyche itself has many levels among them inaccessible ones. However, and most importantly, it adds an authentic aesthetic value to the work. The writer respects the absurdity of the flow of thought and the arbitrariness of the feelings to the degree of not employing even punctuation to the writing. The fragmented mind results in a fragmented language, destroying conventional forms of language.

Beside punctuation, there is a break up with rules of syntax and grammar to create something 'new' that falls under the 'modernist' label. Of course, if the intention of the writer is to fall into that label, the art will not be authentic. It might be new but not authentic as in the case of Stein, unless, beside the technique, there is a higher value of a certain experience of humanity. The preeminent use of this technique is found in James Joyce and Virginia Woolf's writing. As readers, we lived, while reading *Mrs. Dalloway*, in the world of clocks, feeling distressed by time. Woolf uses stream of consciousness to reinforce the value of time in the human's mind. The physicality of time that traditionally has been thought of as residing in the reality outside the human's mind has been replaced by an experience of eternity through the mind itself. Everything outside is seen from the perspective of some characters in the novel. The value of time ceases to be universal and falls into a more individualistic realm that makes it subjective and eternal.

Joyce's *Ulysses* is called the best modernist masterpiece by many critics because it excels at employing stream of consciousness. Joyce allows many characters to reveal the inner worlds of their psyche: their desires, feelings, thoughts, fears, and regrets. Language is broken and punctuation is hardly employed. There are also random sentence structures and

sudden changes of topic. In the following passage, Molly Bloom's mind runs with thoughts and emotions that define her deepest facets of her inner world:

His heart astir he pushed in the door of the Burton restaurant. Stink gripped his trembling breath: pungent meatjuice, slush of greens. See the animals feed. Men, men, men.

Perched on high stools by the bar, hats shoved back, at the tables calling for more bread no charge, swilling, wolfing gobfuls of sloppy food, their eyes bulging, wiping wetted moustaches. A pallid suetfaced young man polished his tumbler knife fork and spoon with his napkin. New set of microbes. A man with an infant's saucestained napkin tucked round him shovelled gurgling soup down his gullet. A man spitting back on his plate: halfmasticated gristle: gums: no teeth to chewchewchew it. Chump chop from the grill. Bolting to get it over. Sad booser's eyes. Bitten off more than he can chew. (161)

In this passage, there are informal words, wrong punctuation, and improper grammar. However, that represents the subjectivity of Molly's mind and her anxiety expressed in a language that is not standard or absolute. The focus is on images perceived by Molly rather than a highly standard and expressive language that would exclude her obsession, which is more true to her character than that language.

While this technique is new, it is also authentic, for truth is revealed. Traditionally, the reader knows nothing about realistic characters but what the author tells him. In *Ulysses*, the reader knows more imperfections about characters who seem composed on the outside but weak and weary from the inside. That is the reality and the truth about the modern reader as well. The reader of *Ulysses* has to be an intellectual; otherwise, the novel would be perplexing and a form of mental torture. The novel is no longer a teacher; it is rather a form of a personal expression. The novelist is not obliged to address all readers.

Stream of consciousness influences the plot as well by making it incoherent and fragmented. The mental freedom of the character and his simultaneous encounter of the world outside himself make the narrative unstable and thus the plot illogical. Modernist writers, as J. Arthur Honeywell argues, “lost interest in constructing logical or rational sequences” (30) that we usually find in realistic novels that rely on causes and effects and appropriate characters made to suit conditioned situations created by the realist to represent a ‘slice of life’. Honeywell gives the example of *Ulysses* as having “incongruous, contradictory, and inconsequential facts” (30). The reader does not acquire any cause and effect system but rather gets absorbed in the ‘structural relations’ until “they are so firmly established that most of the facts have acquired significance” (30). The reason for the modern plot to be so incoherent is because the author relies on visionary intuitions rather than logic. The reader, to apprehend the plot suggested by the author, relies on the sum of fragments that appear to be rambling all over the narrative to portray a certain reality of the novel itself. This fragmentation is the product of the subjectivity of the mind portrayed in one of the characters in the novel who is probably the main narrator. The story is told from the narrow perspective of this narrator which makes it unintelligible for the reader until more patterns of the narrative are uncovered. These patterns, according to Honeywell, could be social, psychological, structural, or mythical, depending on the reality the novelist wants to convey. As readers, we are allowed to experience both: subjectivity and beauty.

Although modernist literature is part of that mission of ‘make it new’, and thus part of a certain category of institutionalized art, it is also a personal existential journey of redefining and reconstructing oneself, whether that self is the writer’s or the reader’s, in one’s meaningless and nihilistic life. Not many modernist authors have achieved that balance of falling into that category and surviving it by defying the nemo. Only great artists, such as Joyce, Woolf, and Eliot, have, while Gertrude Stein, for instance, has not. Thus, according to

Fowles's definition of the authentic, by defying the nemo and surviving time, their art is a form of personal work that speaks to generations of the future; thus, their art is authentic.

Postmodernism shares with modernism one of its most important features which is subjectivity. Like modernism, postmodernism rejects former traditions that promote the universality of human reason and logic at the expense of freedom. However, postmodernism has a more radical and extreme focus on skepticism and moral relativity, targeting disapproval of universal concepts of objectivity, absolute truth, morality, social progress, human nature and even language. The value systems that have been conditioned by society and culture are to be rejected and replaced by relativism and self-referentiality.

Apart from the part of self-referentiality that we will deal with shortly, some critics believe that postmodernism resembles modernism in many ways and this raises a problem of questioning the originality of postmodern artists. They maintain that postmodernism, although it came as a reaction to modernism, is more "significantly influenced by the modern artistic ideas and strategies against which they revolt, for instance by the high evaluation of form, though the postmodernists add force to form, chaos to structure" (Hoffmann 58). Humanities Professor Brian McHale, in *Postmodernist Fiction*, tracks the problem and states that its origin lies in the prefix 'post'. The prefix makes postmodernism forever linked to modernism, yet it is not clear who is to blame for coining the concept. The word 'blame' here is really important because the first aim of the postmodernist is to be original, not to be a follower (3). McHale believes that 'post' does not mean the extension of the former movement with a certain accentuation; it rather means developing out of modernism. He also claims that these concepts, like modernism and postmodernism, are nothing but "discursive artifacts constructed either by contemporary readers and writers or retrospectively by literary historians" for the purpose of categorizing art into historical periods (4). 'Post' simply means 'after'. The relation is more historical than anything. The radical difference lies in that

modernism is concerned with epistemology while postmodernism is concerned with ontological questions. That means modernism is characterized with the hope of constituting knowledge, even if it is subjective and relative, while postmodernism denies its credibility and tries to understand the nature of reality and existence instead. In other words, while modernism has an existential aspect, postmodernism has a rather absurdist outlook.

Postmodernist literature is thus a literature that is highly characterized with self-referentiality, as mentioned before, as its focus is its own meaninglessness and absurdity in the face of the meaningless world. Since there is no superior aim behind writing, then there is no meaning to it and thus the writer/narrator questions the meaning created by himself in his fictional work that he is aware of writing, challenging his own authority as an artist. The techniques implied here are: self-reflexivity, metafiction, intertextuality, pastiche, parody, dark humor, playfulness, and the unreliability of the narrative. These characteristics identify postmodern literature, for they are in themselves techniques to embody the ontological questioning and anxiety of existence that the writer or narrator is facing during the writing of his fiction.

Historically speaking, not all postmodernists are the product of the postmodern era. Although modernist and postmodernist literatures share their break with the rationality of the realist movement and exemplify fragmentary styles of mimesis, postmodernist literature differs in its resistance to reconstruct subjective 'new' meaning through "involving an element of game playing and an ironic stance as well as a kind of playfulness" (Berger X). This particular character of the playful exists in the writings of some of the authors that have been categorized as modernists like James Joyce and Samuel Beckett. Joyce's last novel, *Finnegans Wake*, is considered by many critics, among them McHale, as a postmodernist fictional work. Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*, is also part of what Martin Esslin coined as 'Theatre of the Absurd', a movement that has strongly contributed to the emergence of

postmodernism. We will further analyze Joyce's novel, along with others within the canon, in accordance with some of the techniques we have mentioned earlier.

The first technique that serves as an umbrella term for other techniques (like pastiche, parody, citation, imitation...etc.) is intertextuality. It was first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to stress the importance of the multi-functionality of a text, and it refers to the inevitable relationship of an existing text with other texts. Roland Barthes, a leading thinker in semiotics, believes "that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (146). Barthes asserts that a writer's only remaining authority is to 'blend' writings which render him unoriginal. Of course, Barthes is not condemning the author's authenticity by announcing his 'death' but he is rather informing him that his originality lies only in celebrating the 'blending' and the 'clashing' in a playful comic way. Thus, the aim of intertextual writings according to Marco Juvan in *History and Poetics of Intertextuality* is:

[To] construct the ontological unity of the world and relativizes epistemological access to reality. In so doing, it also calls into question during the course of writing the veracity of artistic representation. It thus creates a sense of the world that is significant for the modern condition—ontological constructivism and pluralism, ethical relativism, and the *verwindung* ('getting over') of modernity, which from the Enlightenment on was founded on the metanarrative of progress and artistic innovations. (84)

This passage clarifies the reason for singling out the relation of the postmodern to the intertextual even when there are references to other texts in modernist literature. While the aim of the existing elements of intertextuality in modernist writing is to bring the 'new' to the

text (as well as to form an epistemological understanding to the world), intertextuality's aim is rather to denounce this power of a possible innovativeness and diminish the authority of the writer as the creator of meaning. Before giving an example of such an implication in a postmodern work, we should first specify one of the umbrella concepts linked to intertextuality. Pastiche is one important technique of intertextuality used by the postmodernist to intertwine former texts.

The etymological origin of the word pastiche is the Italian word 'pasticcio' which refers to a *pâté* consisting of many ingredients. Literally, it is a work of art by one writer that is composed of several former authors' or is an actual imitation of many artistic styles and genres. It differs from allusion in that the reader does not need to be as informed as the author with the imitated (referred to) text. Pastiche also differs from parody in that it lacks the satirical and comic elements in its imitation for other texts. Fredric Jameson, in *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, asserts that pastiche is a "blank Parody" (17), for while parody comments on history or culture, pastiche "is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter" (17). While Linda Hutcheon thinks that there is a certain usefulness of these techniques, for their aim is to offer a political and cultural critique and understanding of history, Jameson emphasizes their futility, for their aim is simply to draw attention to themselves as patchworks of stylistic diversity. Postmodernists are rather driven by a desire to have a history rather than commenting on one (21). Since all has been done before, authors are faced with the dilemma of originality, having no other possibility but to paste fragments of history. Hutcheon's claim, in comparison to Jameson's, contradicts the postmodern aesthetics of aimlessness. Creating or commenting on history to find meaning is rather a modernist feature. Postmodern parody and pastiche are in themselves an escape from meaning.

An example of a postmodern work employing pastiche is Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* which combines the thriller, the medieval, the detective, and many other genres through the story-line (which is in a thrilling detective narrative style) and the creation of characters inspired from real life novelists, philosophers, and characters like Sherlock Holmes, William Ockham, and Jorge Luis Borges. Another example is Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* that draws on multiple texts like Shakespeare's work, *Arabian Nights*, and the Bible. Joyce later announces his own disconnectedness (or as Barthes puts it, 'death') as an author by excessively imitating different styles of other works of art for the only reason that he discovers that he "can do anything [he] want[s] with language" (qtd. in Yee 91). He even goes so far as to call his novel 'crazy' and that he is not the one who writes it, that it could be anyone, pointing his finger in the direction of many strangers in an interview with Eugene Jolas.

Joyce does not just imitate numerous works by other artists but he even parodizes his former texts several times (mainly *Ulysses* and *A Portrait of the Artists as A Young Man* by repeating patterns from their styles in a satirical way in *Finnegans Wake*) in an attempt to rebel against traditions of literary creations, including his. Unlike pastiche that does not include commenting as much as it repeats and pastes other texts together, parody aims at denouncing the importance of the role of the artist as a creator of a certain center. It does that by continually rising up against the heritage of personal and impersonal literary, cultural, and historical tradition and emphasizing the epistemological blankness of the world. Through these techniques, artists shape the implication that nothing is inherently meaningful or deserves meaning.

The author is the central object of criticism in postmodernism. The best technique to undermine the supremacy of the author is metafiction. The concept was first coined by William G. Gass in 1970, which means mainly writing about writing, making the reader

conscious of the artificiality of the text. The postmodernist shares all his technical artifacts with the reader even before making the story by discussing fantasy elements (like Kurt Vonnegut's first chapter in *Slaughterhouse-Five* where he calls the reader's attention to his own presence in the novel and the artificial elements of the fantastic that he adds, like the time travelling and aliens) or character choice, or even changing the storyline to an abrupt ending. Irony, although it is in itself another technique of postmodern fiction, is not excluded from the effect of using metafiction, for metafiction intends on blurring the dividing line between reality (truth) and fiction and that is "a reflexive irony which mocks the realistic claims of artistic significance and truth" (McCaffrey 5). Its aim is also to "insist that the reader accept the work as an invented, purely made-up entity" (5). The technique is even used to parody parody itself in the text. In the following lines, Vonnegut comments on his novel at the end of the first chapter by mocking his own starting and ending lines:

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.

I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.

This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt. It begins like this:

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

It ends like this:

Poo-tee-weet? (22)

In this quote, Vonnegut does not only address the artificiality of the work but he also undermines his authority as a writer, releasing himself of any responsibility of conveying any truth, since truth itself is a non-consistent entity. The technique is based on a deconstructionist approach that prioritizes appearance over essence. It serves as a radical criticism to the Platonic principles that promote the imitation of life through art. The latter has rather become

an apparatus to imitate itself through ridiculing itself. Metafiction is, accordingly, the extreme form of the self-reflexive novel, for it is not just self-referential but can also include elements of irony.

Black humor is another important technique used by postmodernists (although not exclusively employed by them) to point to the absurdity of the human condition, including serious matters like death.<sup>11</sup> Its result on the reader may lead to uneasiness since it satirizes critical situations that should rather be dealt with in a more sensitive way. The term was coined in 1935 by the French surrealist writer and poet, André Breton, who tries to classify Jonathan Swift's writing which blends satire with cynicism and skepticism. However, this technique is mostly common in postmodern writing since most postmodernists are prominent black humorists (and that was how most postwar writers were first labeled), such as John Barth, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, William Gaddis and many others.

The main reason that makes postmodernists the pioneers in employing the device with superiority is its development as a literary technique in the novel rather than plays and poetry, which explains the popularity of tragedy over comedy before this development (Gough). There are other reasons to its prevalence in postmodern fiction. First, the aim of black comedy is undermining the gravity of all serious matters of the human condition; just like modernist fiction, black comedy rids the world of its most celebrated values by making it meaningless and absurd (although this is more of a target to postmodernists and black comedy is more like a first useful device to achieve it). Second, it is also a tool that challenges established traditions of literary mimesis, for the victim/oppressed is no longer sympathized by the audience; it is rather the victimizer/oppressor who is sympathized. This creates a 'new', yet meaningless, principle that contradicts with the epistemological mission of the modernists. There is only one advantage on the side of the oppressed here; through black comedy, he

develops coping mechanisms in the face of his traumatic reality that enable him to rise above his struggle for a more meaningful situation.

Joseph Heller, in *Catch-22*, exploits black comedy to comment on the triviality of human suffering and its absurdity. The characters in this novel are in a war setting where the situation should be more tragic than comic. However, satirical comments arise from disappointment, disillusionment, and purposelessness, which make black comedy most suitable, for “much of the current vogue of black humor occurs in satiric works whose butt is what the author conceives to be the widespread contemporary condition of social cruelty, inanity, or chaos”(Abrams 278). The conversation between Chaplain, Dunbar, and Major Sanderson in following quote displays elements of comedy and cruelty in the reaction of both Dunbar and Sanderson to Chaplain’s dream:

‘I’ve been having a very peculiar dream ever since I learned you were wounded,’ confessed the chaplain. ‘I used to dream every night that my wife was dying or being murdered or that my children were choking to death on morsels of nutritious food. Now I dream that! I’m out swimming in water over my head and a shark is eating my left leg in exactly the same place where you have your bandage.’

‘That’s a wonderful dream,’ Dunbar declared. ‘I bet Major Sanderson will love it.’ ‘That’s a horrible dream!’ Major Sanderson cried. (278)

We have to understand that the seriousness of the traumatic dream is faced with Dunbar’s sarcastic comment, although the dream is an effect of his war wound, to ridicule, not just the pointlessness of the austerity of their situation, but also the uselessness of Major Sanderson’s position as a psychoanalyst, extending black humor to parody Freud’s major works. This breaks traditions of all epistemological thought.

There are many other techniques used by postmodernists that stem from the ones I have already dealt with which I will further explore in the fourth chapter. These include historiographic metafiction and the unreliability of the narrator. However, there is one last technique we will refer to that is rather common in almost all postmodern works, which is 'paranoia'. Paranoia contributes to the unreliability of the narrator for it deludes the reader to the belief of an order behind the chaotic world. The aim for this delusion is inferring a certain insight about human existence. Postmodern characters suffer from a fear "that someone else is patterning your life, that there are all sorts of invisible plots afoot to rob you of your autonomy of thought and action, that conditioning is ubiquitous" (Tanner 15). These post-war traumatic fears promote a fragmented and disconnected mind that excludes the other from one's life, for the other represents a threat, a conspiracy. An example of such behavior lies in Kurt Vonnegut's Dwayne Hoover in *Breakfast of Champions* who is rather convinced that everyone around him is a robot and that he is the only human in the world. Although there is a prevailing creative side to paranoia, it rather makes of the paranoid a holder of a certain truth and insight that is exceptional because of it; thus, distrust is rather glorified. The artist creates spaces between individuals and promotes solipsism.

All the techniques used in postmodernism prove that it is highly experimental and that there is no real epistemological outcome. What the artist stresses is the absurdity of the situation of Man in the world. This absurdity is met with another. The playful adds importance to form and neglects the importance of meaning which contradicts what Fowles and existentialists perceive of an authentic novel that defies the nemo through surviving time because it convey a timeless condition of humanity. According to him, obsession with form is an obsession out of fear of losing one's individuality. The artist here wants to be remembered by escaping the limitations of his finite self by disregarding the importance of content in favor of "a jungle of pastiche" (A 51).

## Conclusion

Existential authenticity is still an abstract concept in philosophy because the evidence of its practicality is answered by oneself only, which makes philosophy a dictating systematic ideology only. What makes the answer to its practicality concrete is art only. A work of art does not belong to its creator only, even if it is a personal statement; it also belongs to its audience.

Through our analysis of the concept in the works of existentialists and Fowles, we came to the understanding that authenticity is not necessarily founding something 'new'. It is rather choosing freely one's true self, what Fowles refers to as the triumph of the Few over the Many in an individual self; that means having something personal and true to oneself to live by and convey to the world. As a result of this conception, we find that Ezra Pound's 'make it new' might not be an existential statement after all. Fowles believes that authentic art aims at being individualistic, in terms of creating an innovative form and content, yet free from neurotic obsessions through devaluing the importance of knowledge. That is both form and content are equally balanced and important. That does not mean that modernist fiction is not authentic; since it values both originality of form and content, for it promotes an epistemological foundation through themes of self-discovery, and it speaks to generations of readers, it is considered authentic.

Unlike modernism that, in spite of experimentation, rather struggles to create an epistemological meaning that is unique and personal yet universal in the sense that it unites humans in one condition, postmodernism holds a neurotic obsession that imitates and exaggerates experimentation to survive and to belong to a systemized canon that promotes individualism through the absurd. According to Fowles' conception of authentic art, postmodernism is considered to be inauthentic. Although the reader has finally the full freedom to make out the text subjectively, the latter has no point to make in the first place.

Through our analysis of Fowles's fiction, which has been labeled postmodern, we are to approve to disapprove his conception.

## Notes

1. Kierkegaard conceptualizes his use of pseudonyms, irony, and humor as ‘indirect communication’ in many of his works, including *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1846), *Works of Love* (1947), and *The Point of View of My Work as an Author* (1859).

2. The word ‘crowd’ is similar to Heraclitus’s the ‘Many’, as we will see later in the same section.

3. Sartre’s conception of ‘despair’ is ‘anguish’. Almost every existentialist has termed the concept differently.

4. The untranslated term Nietzsche uses is ‘Übermensch’ which has been translated to many versions, among them ‘Superman’ and ‘overman’. I will be using the latter.

5. The word ‘herd’ is similar to Kierkegaard’s ‘crowd’.

6. The idea is originated in Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy in an attempt to break from the tradition of metaphysics.

7. Angst or Anxiety is Kierkegaard’s ‘despair’ and Sartre’s ‘anguish’.

8. ‘They’ is the same as Nietzsche’s ‘herd’ and Kierkegaard’s ‘crowd’.

9. The Aristos is Fowles’ ideal man.

10. Whenever we use the word ‘authentic’ from this part onward, we mean Fowles’s conception of it. That means art that defies the nemo, survives time, and communicates with every individual through time.

11. When dealing with death, black comedy is rather termed as ‘gallows comedy’.

## **Chapter Two:**

The Many, the Potential Few, and the Potential Feminist

## Introduction

Fowles's the Many is a condemned social group. It is nevertheless the prevailing one in society as Fowles observes in his philosophical work, *The Aristos*, so his celebrated aristoi should not fall in this category. Yet Fowles does not eliminate an opportunity of education to overcome the Many that is inherent in an individual (for the Many and the Few are forces within us as well) and responsible for his inauthenticity. This chapter offers an analysis to this category and how it is represented in Fowles's fiction; it also highlights the overlapping of his Many with Sartre's existential inauthenticity and answers the question on whether there is any difference between them.

The second section analyzes Fowles's potential Few before they mature into full membership. It also underlines the important elements present in their character which qualifies them to take that journey. The first and second sections investigate the plausibility of the practicality of Fowles's theories on what makes a Man inauthentic and since we have not elaborated on what makes him authentic, this chapter might offer enough knowledge on what one should not be instead of what one should be.

The last section analyzes Fowles's own conception of women and his potentiality of being a feminist. Fowles believes that women are superior beings to men, for as men are analytical thinkers, women are creative lovers. According to him, conservatism is the product of masculinity while progress, innovation, and authenticity are feminine products. As a male writer in a patriarchal age, Fowles's ideas are questioned; examining them in his fiction is crucial to judging his portrayal of women. Since the feminine is a generating power of the authentic, embracing it should add to the author's journey towards the authentic.

## 2.1. The Immature 'Many': The Inauthenticity of the Common Man

Fowles divides society into two categories of people: the Many and the Few. The Many are necessarily inauthentic, in existential terms. As we have dealt with in the first chapter, the Many lack creativity, freedom, and education. They are socially and intellectually inferior to the Few. Although we have dealt with the philosophy of Fowles at length in the former chapter, this section illustrates the validity of its practicality on an individual's life. Fredrick Clegg, from *The Collector*, is the most important example of the Many in the collection of fiction we have selected. He is the only character from lower middle class who perfectly fits the classification set for him by Fowles to incarnate that role. The unnamed thief in the short story "Poor Koko" can also be added as a member of the Many, yet he is not the main protagonist in the novel and so he will not be the focus of our analysis. The other examples that we will not discuss at length, since they are not even acknowledged by their writer, are socially superior yet they lack the intelligence that Fowles's members of the Few possess.

Thus, the main character we will be dealing with in this section is Clegg. He is, par excellence, a member of the 'hoi polloi', of "the vast mass of mankind [that] are not highly intelligent – or highly moral, or highly gifted artistically, or indeed highly qualified to carry out any of the nobler human activities" (A 9).<sup>1</sup> The reason for our assertion of what Clegg is lies in the writer's condemnation of this character in his description of the main theme of the novel in *The Aristos*. He declares that his aim in writing *The Collector* lies mainly in an "attempt to analyse ... some results of this confrontation" between the Few and the Many, "between 'Them' and 'Us'" (10). The confrontation is between the two main characters, Clegg and Miranda Grey. The latter is an art student and a potential member of the Few. Fowles, accordingly, has been accused to being an elitist, even a fascist at times. His division of people into two social categories is reductive; in order for him to legitimately deny this accusation, he states in the preface to the new edition of *The Aristos* that "the dividing line between the Few

and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals” (9-10).<sup>2</sup> This brings him closer to existentialism where the struggle to achieve authenticity is an individual struggle against all traditional and psychological restraints. Therefore, although Clegg and Miranda are two opposite individuals representing two opposite social groups, Clegg is too eccentric to fit in any social group since his complexes are mainly personal and psychological. His struggles do stem from the enslaving environment he was brought up in, yet his freedom is an impossible mission, for Miranda tries to educate him out of his ignorance and fails.

The novel opens by Clegg describing Miranda, yet it also lays his social background for the readers to grasp a general idea about their first narrator. Clegg’s relation to Miranda is voyeuristic. No actual conversation has gone between the two before the kidnapping, for she “didn’t look once at [him while he] watched the back of her head” (C 3). The reason lies in the class difference between the two. Her family is rich while he comes from the working class and whose job is a clerk who toils among “files and ledgers” and who barely has “a free moment” (3). His obsession with her is pathological:

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. (3)

The above quote marks the second paragraph of the novel. From the very start, we understand Fowles’s choice of the word ‘collector’ as the title of the novel. Words like ‘catching’, ‘rarity’, ‘going up to it very carefully’, ‘Pale Clouded Yellow’, and ‘connoisseur’ show that Clegg is a butterfly collector, something we learn from him later on. The lepidopterist in him is his only passionate knowledge about the external world and thus he

projects it on the human world through Miranda since she is in that world a ‘rarity’, a ‘Pale Clouded Yellow’, who must be possessed by the really talented ‘connoisseur’. Thus, ‘catching’ Miranda, whom he calls impersonally at first in his diary as ‘X’, would elevate his value as an artist. The word ‘connoisseur’ is evidence that Clegg seeks authenticity; however, according to Fowlesea standards, he fails. His desperation to categorize Miranda makes him inauthentic since a real artist values his own freedom and that of his characters. His narrow-minded and immature approach to life is shown in his overtly expressed surprises to the unexpected ways Miranda acts in contrast to his expectations and fantasies repeating that in his “dreams it was always the other way round” (34). His ignorance of dehumanizing Miranda into a dead-fated butterfly shows his detachment from reality.

Clegg lives in his fantasy world where he can create and classify the real world into a dead creation of art. His “limited imagination is expressed partly through clichés which shape his fantasies in both their sentimental and violent transmutations” (Cooper 23). He plays the roles he has for himself according to his fantasies and expects Miranda to play along, for her role is his “guest” (C 3). The kidnapping is in itself a fantastic act that is made real, yet the nature of its reality differs in conception to both characters. He has built, before bringing Miranda to his gothic country house, an imaginary world where everything goes the way he wants while his captive keeps acting in a non-conformist way that his schizophrenic mind cannot make out. In fact, Clegg’s schizophrenia is what is limiting his scopes of understanding the world around him. Mahmoud Salami argues that Clegg is a man “unable to separate his dream world from reality” in the sense that he “fantasizes and imagines different worlds with Miranda, the ‘object’ of his dreams” (56), even if these worlds are in fact contradictory to each other:

That was the day I first gave myself the dream that came true. It began where she was being attacked by a man and I ran up and rescued her. Then somehow

I was the man that attacked her, only I didn't hurt her; I captured her and drove her off in the van to a remote house and there I kept her captive in a nice way. Gradually she came to know me and like me and the dream grew into the one about our living in a nice modern house, married, with kids and everything. (C 14)

He is both the captor and the 'rescuer', imagining himself a fantastic hero in her world. Even the house he buys displays a dualistic world where the upper world is bright and open while the underground (where Miranda is locked) is "damp, the walls like wet wood in winter" and "a bit frightening" (17). The conception of morality is another evidence of Clegg's schizophrenia, for he does not think of his actions as wrong or right but simply as "within [his] rights" (120). The reader finds it difficult to judge him since even Miranda does not think of morality as good or bad. She tries to teach her philosophy to Clegg and ignores the fact that he needs to be taught about right and wrong rather than 'beautiful' and 'ugly': "I just think of things as beautiful or not. Can't you understand? I don't think of good or bad. Just of beautiful or ugly. I think a lot of nice things are ugly and a lot of nasty things are beautiful" (88). Miranda's constant attempts to teach Clegg about having a better taste (by criticizing the decoration and breaking things that are not aesthetically fulfilling to her) strengthens Clegg's hatred for her class and his sense of inferiority which make things worse by widening the gap between them.

Schizophrenia is not Clegg's only mental depravity. There are elements of transference, denial, and repression in his character. He chooses Miranda as a mother substitute since he is an orphan. He denies to the reader that he "never had any nasty desire to take advantage of the situation" (63). Most importantly, his social awkwardness exiles him from normal communication with the other gender, for his only sexual experience is a failing impotency with a prostitute; his colleagues at work have ideas about how to converse with

women while Clegg, against his own will, goes on to tell Miranda that he loves her as an answer to her threatening questions about her abduction. These three elements build up to constitute a fragmented mind that refuses to separate what is fantastic from what is real. He cannot reconcile Miranda's real character to the idealized woman he has always had in mind so her gradual reality comes as a shock to him. David Punter construes that his psychopathic behavior means that "he lacks any true empathy with others [and] that his condition is untreatable. It is not that somehow there are difficulties or symptoms in Clegg which could be resolved ... whatever is wrong with Clegg goes down to the very root of his being, to his entire self-construction in the world" (63-4). Miranda realizes that Clegg is mad and says it to him several times in the novel. Clegg's defensive attitude shows his ignorance of his situation which gives more proof to his madness; Miranda comments: "that's what madmen must be like. They aren't deliberately mad, they must be as shocked in a way as everyone else when they finally do something terrible" (124).

The rootedness for this 'untreatable' condition lies in Clegg's emotional myopia. He is not just emotionally illiterate; he lacks the means to see that. The reason for this lack of empathy has to do with his upbringing. Putting social class aside, his parentless situation and the type of family he is left (by his mother) with make a great part of his solipsism. The circumstances of the death of his father and the terrible relation he has with his mother come to be accentuated by his aunt's lack of empathy towards him. The only kind figure is his uncle who dies when he is fifteen. It is his uncle who instills in him a passion for collecting butterflies. We can even say that this passion allows the only time where Clegg has an emotional connection to a person in his life for he "was as good as a father to [him]" (6). Although Miranda thinks that most Englishmen suffer from a lack of emotional literacy when she discusses this with Minny in particular relation to Piers, Miranda's friend, Clegg is an

extreme pathological version whose empathy has a great connection to his perverted solipsistic morality rather than his Englishness.

As many critics argue, Clegg and Miranda's relationship may allude to Cupid and Psyche's love in classical mythology. Psyche, who in a way identifies more with Miranda, is a beautiful goddess whose name means 'soul' and is a representative of the immortal incarnation of emotion. This makes the goddess of beauty and love, Venus, jealous of her. As a result, she sends her son, Cupid, who represents raw sexuality, to make her fall in love with a monster so that she would be imprisoned in this fantasy for eternity. However, Cupid falls in love with her and her puritanical self experiences a sexual awakening that ends in marriage, the purest form of sexual love. It is unclear at first to see where Clegg fits in here; he could have been like Cupid since his sexual repressiveness is a principle character in him, yet his emotional myopia renders the balance of the union impossible. Maybe the story is a rewriting of the myth since Fowles seems to make Miranda end up with the monster rather than Cupid. Clegg is, according to Miranda, Caliban, a subhuman monster in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

In spite of Clegg's lie about his name (he tells Miranda that his name is Ferdinand instead of Frederick), he has no idea about the relation of Ferdinand to Miranda in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. However, Miranda does and instantly repudiates the allusion. She, instead, sees a 'Caliban', the name of the physically deformed and oppressed slave, in the person and takes it as a mission to call him so throughout the novel. Clegg's denial of his own original name can be seen as an inauthentic act; his aim is to charm Miranda and plays the role of the chaste 'Prince Charming' whose fake sense of respect to her lies in seeing her as sexually ridden (Acheson 13). Caliban is a more suitable tag since Clegg shares the beast-like qualities with him. Caliban's physical deformity is rather a mental one in Clegg.<sup>3</sup> This allusion places the characters in the fantastic realm again where Miranda is trying her best to escape. However, 'Clegg' as a name has a more mundane character than the fantastic Caliban; in

addition to its monosyllabic bluntness, it “suggests encumbrance and enclosure (‘claggy’ [sticky], ‘clay’, ‘clog’) while the similarity with the dialect word ‘cleg’, a horsefly, together with the way Clegg is frequently associated in the early parts of the book with the word ‘bug’, remind us of the distinction sketched by Stein in *Lord Jim* between earthy, crawling bugs and airborne butterflies” (Loveday 25). Yet while Clegg is a collector of butterflies (bugs), Caliban is a collector of what they represent (souls), so they run close in the same schizophrenic persona. The clash of the projected name (Caliban and Ferdinand) and its mundane reality (Clegg and Frederick) is symbolic of Clegg’s own projected fantasies on the real world and on the reality of Miranda and her sexual identity as we will come to see shortly.

The whole idea of the plot is also inspired from two almost fantastic incidents in Fowles’s life. The first is reading a newspaper article about a woman kidnapped by a mentally disordered man and locked in an air-raid basement and the second is watching a performance of Béla Bartók’s opera, *Duke Bluebeard’s Castle* (1918). The last tells a story inspired from a fairytale written by Charles Perrault, a 17<sup>th</sup> century French fabulist. Although, unlike Clegg, Bluebeard allows his new wife to have the keys to the only locked room in his castle, he does not allow her to open it in his absence. The wife, intrigued, disobeys her husband to discover that he actually has a collection of dead women in it. When he discovers the blood stain on the keys, he tries to murder her but he fails since her brothers come to the rescue. The gothic atmosphere of this fable and, since Clegg can be identified to many gothic villains as we will see in the fourth chapter, Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) lie in the use of the motif of the cave and how it is a projection of a certain obsession in the mind of its creator.

While Ambrosio, a depraved monk, in *The Monk* rapes a woman in a crypt, which is an underground in the church, Clegg, with his monk-like prudishness, captures this woman in an underground to a house he buys especially for the act of idealizing her. Fowles rewrites a modern version in a modern society where sexual prudishness may amount to a state of social

unacceptability. Clegg's Calibanism lies in his pathological resistance to his real role and identity in society. The house Clegg buys off the pools he wins is exiled and far away from the city. Its basement, resembling a 'cave-like' underworld, may allude to Plato's 'Allegory of the Cave' in which prisoners mistake the shadows on the wall reflected by the fire as the real world while the real world is outside the cave. Only in the real world can they attain real knowledge. The shadowy reflections are Clegg's narrow perception of the world since his created world lies in his works of art, his collection of humans, and his underground cave. However, Clegg's knowledge has always been limited and perverted, so since Miranda is the prisoner and she ends up failing to get out of the cave, her own newly gained knowledge of the world might be mistaken for shadows reflected on the wall rather than a knowledge she can live with if she is to go out in the real world and practice her own philosophical assumptions.

Miranda's need to go out of the cave is a need to become an eligible member of the Few. While she dies at the end, she does not succeed in attaining full membership and her philosophical assumptions end up having no more than a fictional value. Ironically, since Miranda is identified with butterflies, butterflies are usually the subject of art of many prisoners through history. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, a Swiss-American psychiatrist, in her memoir, *The Wheel of Life* (1997), talks about a visit to Maidanek, a concentration camp that belonged to the Nazi in Poland, after WWII. She noticed that prisoners used repeated drawn images on the walls: butterflies. After 25 years of research, she discovered the meaning of the images. The word butterfly in Greek is 'psyche' which means the human soul; what it represents for the prisoners is freedom of soul after death. The metamorphic stages of a butterfly's life are symbolic of the changes undergone by our human souls. As a butterfly's first stages of life, the prisoners suffer the same claustrophobic exile. They attain complete freedom at the end of their lives. Clegg is a captor of butterflies and Miranda is one since he identifies her from the very start as a rare species. She does not find freedom until she dies.

While Miranda dies at the end, she plays a lively role that cheers up the enclosed narrative of Clegg with her love and passion for freedom and art. Clegg, on the other hand, has always been associated with death from the start of the novel. In addition to collecting butterflies and killing them, Miranda describes him as “stiff” and “sexless” with eyes that have “no expressions” (128). He has no liveliness, no passion but for ‘having’: “I got nothing if you go”, he tells Miranda (271). He defines himself according to what he has and what he owns. His sense of selfhood is unfulfilled. His obsession for possessing is also the product of the industrialized modern world where the want to ‘have’ is stronger than the want to ‘be’. This self-materialization is what makes Clegg inauthentic. He fills in the gaps of real empty spaces, which would make a great opportunity for him to face his existential anguish, with fast-fulfilling desirable objects. That is what Miranda represents for him. His idea for love is replaced by power to control and possess. This is further illustrated in the novel when Miranda tries to seduce the impotent Clegg and he loses ‘respect’ for her. He changes his ‘respect’ to a cruel desire to control her by forcing her to pose naked for his pornographic pictures. This transforms Miranda’s state from a ‘guest’ to a prisoner, from a ‘Madonna’ to a prostitute, and since she is a ‘rarity’ that should not behave in that manner, her sexual openness is an unwanted feature for the autistic Clegg as he declares: “What she never understood was that with me it was having. Having her was enough. Nothing needed doing. I just wanted to have her, and safe at last” (101).

When Miranda becomes weak again at the end of the novel (because of her pneumonia), Clegg allows “protective affection to submerge his will to dominate” (Loveday 16) which shows that he is willing to love as long as his captive is what he imagines it to be, static and weak, like his photographic art. Pamela Cooper argues that the only transformation that Clegg is capable of is “progressive devitalization, for his collecting imposes stasis and a kind of living dead on organic creatures” (26). This static feature lies in objectifying his

victims into a work of art that lacks liveliness, which is photography, another dead quality about him, for the art that represents an image of life is painting. While Miranda paints, Clegg takes (as in ‘captures’) pictures. Clegg’s Photography is related to his sense of voyeurism. He creates what Fowles believes a type of “debased anti-art” since it is another example for the metaphor of collecting (Cooper 25). Clegg’s art is another way to express his pornographic fantasies of captured and still erotic experiences: “I thought of her sitting on my knees, very still, with me stroking her soft blonde hair, all out loose as I saw it after” (C 34). His sexual attraction lies in her passive submissiveness which means that his unconscious revulsion for her open sexuality in the seduction scene is transference of his disgust for his own sexual narcissism. When Miranda says that “sex is just an activity” (107), his own repressive values of sexuality declare her similar to the prostitute he once encountered, for he “could not stand the shame” (105).

Clegg’s sexual conventionality reveals itself when he tells Miranda that he “didn’t think that [she was] that sort” (99) when Miranda offers him her body as a price for her freedom. Sexual impotence might be the reason for Clegg’s attitude, for he believes that sexuality is “some crude animal thing that he was born without” (8); however, this reading does not exclude his sexuality altogether, for his sexual repression is a repression exposed when the other is around so what he suffers is a sexual solipsism which results in creating his elusive pornographic art that prompts him to take pictures of Miranda to fulfill a fantasy similar to the pornographic magazines he uses for his onanism. As a result, Miranda is either sexlessly idealized when he still has ‘respect’ for her or brutally and extremely prostituted to fit his fantasies. In both ways, Clegg shows disrespect for Miranda by first denying her an identity she freely chooses and then by imposing an identity he instigates.<sup>4</sup> The second identity is using Miranda officially, as he allows her some freedom at the start, as a sexual object:

I went and fetched the camera and flash equipment. She struggled of course, she shook her head, she looked daggers with her eyes, as they say, she even tried to go all soft, but I kept at her. I got her garments off and at first she wouldn't do as I said but in the end she lay and stood like I ordered (I refused to take if she did not co-operate). So I got my pictures. I took her till I had no more bulbs left. (117-8)

This photographic 'rape' (Cooper 27) relates the art of photography to pornography denying the object of art any freedom of expression. The power lies in the hands of the artist who 'takes' away the freedom of Miranda by taking her picture in this degraded manner. The camera, with its similar visual impotency as that of its holder, oppresses its subject and exposes its owner's thirst for violence. The Ferdinand he wants to be, with his frigid and menacing chivalry, is nothing but "a mask which hides his reality as Caliban, the would-be violator" (29).

Clegg's sexual solipsism brings him more power and thus more place in his fantastic world which is ridden of real people. This fantastic world makes him either the sentimental lover of the virgin or an anti-artist who rapes the vitality of its product into photographic stillness; Miranda understands her value in his art: "I know why he likes the photographing business. He thinks it makes me think he's artistic. And of course he hasn't a clue. I mean he gets me in focus, and that's all. No imagination" (C 148). That focus and lack of imagination constitute the very core for Clegg's sexual art: "I used to look at [the pictures] sometimes. I could take my time with them. They didn't talk back at me" (109). And so Miranda talking back, sexually, means her transformation from her fantastic aloofness to her symbolic and literal death, for the "best [pictures] were with her face cut off" (118).

Clegg does not only violate Miranda's artistic and moral values, as we will come to discuss in the next section, but also her jargon (Cooper 37). He sees his pictures as "artistic"

and interprets her hands tied to her bed as “an interesting motif” (C 118). This linguistic plagiarism comes as no surprise, for the reader by now is already familiar with Clegg’s unoriginal style. He uses clichés and euphemism which accentuate the dead quality of his own language. His use of idioms is stylistically inferior and at many times inappropriate and misplaced. Clichés like ‘as they say’ and ‘you might say’ are repeated eleven times in the narrative. These show a recording quality to his learning method that lacks authenticity and individuality. Euphemisms like ‘passed away’, ‘guest’, and ‘took my breath away’ show a quality of his fake assumption of the romantic, newly rich, lover. Clegg’s struggles to live up to that role further imprison him in his low social and intellectual background.

His style, even with the parroting phrases he learns, has a colloquial quality about it. In the very first paragraph of the novel, he uses a set of adverbs that are inappropriately juxtaposed (‘almost everyday sometimes’ and ‘over the road over the frosting’). Throughout the novel he uses ‘and’, ‘a lot’, ‘too’, ‘so on’, ‘stuff’, and many other trite words in abundance. The mood that Fowles sets for us here by starting with Clegg’s dull prose is informative of the narrator’s own ignorance. Clegg’s language and his account create a balance and a sense of acceptance for the reader, for the sinister plot prepared for Miranda reflects on the social and intellectual background presented through his writing style. The reader does not find Clegg repulsive as a character but as an individual and that is exactly Fowles’s aim. Clegg is after all writing in a way to defend himself and so he is in direct relation to the reader. This leads us to the discuss his narrative style and what it can say about Clegg’s personality.<sup>5</sup>

Although Miranda’s diary is vaguely addressed, Clegg’s account is a confession narrative. He writes to explain and to plead his case as if in a court. This technique is intended to make the reader suspicious about Clegg’s narrative, which actually leaves out some of the details mentioned by Miranda. Miranda’s diary is enclosed between the two parts narrated by Clegg; the first recounts the abduction and the subsequent events that follow (among them the

unfortunate seduction scene) and the second recounts Miranda's illness and death and Clegg's interest in abducting another girl whose name also starts with 'M'. As a result, Clegg's narrative works to imprison Miranda's and to indicate a sinister circularity that reveals a great deal about Clegg's obsessive behaviors. This shows that Miranda's value to Clegg is nothing more than a cherished work of art.

While Clegg's narrative depersonalizes Miranda, its use of the past simple makes it "completed, closed, safely bygone and chronicled events" (Loveday 20). It is also dateless, in contrast to Miranda's which indicates exact dates; this rather makes it more circular and its events timeless. The intention of the abduction of Marian at the end of the novel, which we know it will come true even when he declares that he has "not made [his] mind yet" since he repeats emphatically that "of course it is still an idea" and then explains himself to the reader in a fashion of denial and self-justification that we are already familiar with that he "only put the stove down there today because the room needs drying out anyway" (C 305), indicates that history will repeat itself in the same exact way so Clegg does not bother mentioning exact dates: "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" (305). Now Miranda is officially a 'thing' to be compared to the 'other thing' which is another 'M'. The end is less persuasive; our narrator might be embracing his new perverted nature with no feeling of guilt. He is now the psychopath.

Clegg's narrative ending in the same way it starts indicates its lack of openness. Its circularity proves Clegg's inability for maturity and growth. Its enclosure in the past refutes a fresh futurity. In short, his narrative is inauthentic, denying him a hope of change from his enslaved obsessive mind. The quality of circularity is not the only condemning one. As we have seen, his confessional style makes him less appealing to the audience he desperately

wants to appeal to. A free existentialist would not care for an audience or, as Loveday conceptualizes it, “some accusing eye fixed upon him” (22). The confession narrative brings him closer to J. D. Salinger’s protagonist, Holden Caulfield, in *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951). The latter shares with Clegg an important feature despised by Fowles: the inarticularity of the ‘angry hero’, or what has been traditionally called ‘anti-hero’.

Fowles criticizes the glamorization of the inarticulate hero and the ‘angry young man’ movement celebrated in the works of British drama, fiction, and films in the 1950s and 1960s. The concept originates in the autobiography of Leslie Paul in 1951. It describes a disillusioned social and artistic group of young British writers, along with their protagonists, who oppose the establishment and bourgeois values. Among these writers are the ones mentioned by Miranda, who, we must not forget, speaks for Fowles. She persuades Clegg to read *The Catcher in the Rye* to see the repulsiveness of his acts through the protagonist who shares his absurdism. Clegg is, accordingly, repulsed by the novel but for different reasons. He believes that the protagonist is “a mess” and does not see any relation to him (C 219). Miranda again tries to explain that her intention in giving Clegg the book is for him to identify with Holden, yet he does not seem to perceive it. The tragedy of Clegg lies in his inability to see through these similarities, through the ‘mess’ of his actions. Miranda gives up, for he always finds a way to “wriggle out of [things]” (220) and instead of giving him anything else to read, she adds to the gap between them by further categorizing him as another angry young man; this time it is Sillitoe’s Arthur Seaton whom she thinks of as ‘disgusting’: “I think the most disgusting thing of all is that Alan Sillitoe doesn’t show that he’s disgusted by his young man. I think they think young men like that are really rather fine” (248). Fowles refuses to celebrate Clegg’s selfishness through Miranda.

What the latter finds repulsive in Clegg in comparison to Sillitoe’s Arthur Seaton is his selfishness and his incapacity to see the other as having the right to choose for themselves.

Clegg, like them, lacks empathy and understanding of freedom. His love for Miranda is the kind of possessive love that Sartre argues against to achieve existential authenticity.

According to Sartre, love is mostly based on power. Its basis is attention and ownership where one lover necessarily requires complete control over the other. Control is against one of the most important existential values which is freedom. In this case, it is the freedom of the other.

This would limit, not just the other's, but one's authenticity which its achievement is based on the eradication of dependability. Clegg depends on his own fantastic and idealistic world which is embodied in the other, Miranda. All his plans and tactics are centered on her.

Although Miranda's narrative includes a great part of her memories before her capture (mostly those of G.P. and her sister), his memories are all of him stalking her in the streets without her knowledge. He even centers his hobby of collecting butterfly on her. He simply denies himself, through all this transference, his own freedom.

Thus, Clegg's inauthenticity also lies in his relation to himself. He refuses to take responsibility for his actions and is in constant state of denial and self-explanation. He claims that he does not believe in God, yet he prays for her at the end because he thinks "it feels right" (296). Clegg's disbelief in God is not existential in principle, which the latter contradicting statement shows. His disbelief is in another powerful figure that denies him his tyrant self. He is after all the only omnipotent god in Miranda's short life and he is the one who decides when she dies. His religious beliefs are of trivial importance, in terms of originality, to his conception of right and wrong which is absurd to the point where it makes his denial (that he was not aware of her being really sick and that she was not acting) ridiculous and even sinister, for he even decides to forgive her as a defensive attitude against his own faults and feelings of guilt: "I forgave her all the other business. Not while she was living, but when I knew she was dead, that was when I finally forgave her. All sorts of nice things came back" (296). He relieves himself of the guilt of killing her by forgiving her for her

audacity to decategorize herself and acting a part she was not supposed to play. Even Clegg is playing a part. His inauthenticity lies also in performing a staged version of the mass-market detective novels he reads: “I thought of everything, just like I’d been doing it all my life. Like I’d been a secret agent or a detective” (22). After forgiving her, and after all the ‘nice things came back’, he thinks about killing himself and laying beside her in the fashion of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, playing the role of the romantic lover (Acheson 15) until he finds her diary which shocks him into a reality that requires another prisoner.

Clegg is not the product of his social background as Miranda thinks and as we will come to discuss in the next chapter when we deal with class division in Fowles’s fiction. Many critics, among them the ones we used in this section so far, believe that Clegg’s idealization of Miranda is a result of a repressed aspiration that despises her class and idealize it at the same time. Fowles, through Miranda’s pronouncements, does that too. This argument runs against existentialism, even if it agrees with Fowles’s division of people into the Many and the Few. As we have seen, Clegg is a victim of his own psychological imbalance (that is the result of the lack of empathy in his adopting family) and existential choices. His lack of education is one important factor, yet Miranda’s ways to educate him reveal a certain sense of condescending superiority which we will deal with in the next chapter. The Many and the Few are within one person, as Fowles later rereads his own claim. We can see this in other members of the Many whose existential choices are what make them inauthentically imprisoned in that status, not their own class. Ernestina and Mrs. Poulteney in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* are from higher class although Ernestina lacks the title. They are both declared (by the narrator who works as Fowles’s surrogate) to be members of the inauthentic Many. The two characters reside in the Victorian era which makes of existential choices to women real social outcasts (like Sarah). De Deukans in *The Magus* is another example of a

higher class individual who is an obsessive collector of works of art; however, he will be dealt with in relation to Conchis, the magus, and Nicholas in the next chapter.<sup>6</sup>

Ernestina is put in contrast with the main female character, and the most powerful in Fowles's fiction, Sarah Woodruff. The former is fashionable with a style even "the resident ladies of Lyme would not dare to wear for at least another year" (*FLW* 11) while the latter is always dressed in black. Ernestina is from upper middle class yet her father's industry, disagreeable for a gentleman in that era, gives him economic prominence superior to that of Charles Smithson, the main protagonist and his daughter's fiancé. Sarah, on the other hand, used to be a governess and is a social outcast because of her relation to the 'French lieutenant' of the title. Thus, while one represents sexual chastity (Ernestina), the other represents forbidden sexuality. The former is associated with modernity and civilization, and the latter with wilderness and the natural world. However, and most importantly, Ernestina lacks the insight, creativity, freedom, and intelligence that Sarah possesses. Her conventional values condemn her as the least favorite among the two in the novel. What puts these two women into contrast is their relation to the same man, Charles. It is through Charles that we understand that Ernestina is too conventional and shallow to make of him a happy person. The narrator seems to invite the reader to distinguish between the inauthentic "shortsighted" Ernestina (14) and the authentic Sarah who seems, from the very start, to look "through him" (16).

It seems that Ernestina is inferior to Sarah in her conformity and her reverence to Charles whom she sees, since he is a member of the aristocracy, as superior to her. This is further illustrated in chapter 24 when she immaturely reacts to hearing about Charles's uncle denying him his inheritance by deciding to marry. She blames herself and social status, being a "draper's daughter" (194), for it. It is in this chapter that Charles, after having few conversations with the mature Sarah, feels detached from Ernestina who ends up choosing the

“different role”, seeing that Charles grows “nervously stern” (196), of the pleasing submissive Victorian wife-to-be. This does present Ernestina as inauthentic since she relies on Charles and her Victorian values to define her role in society. She even denies any thought that challenges her sexual prudishness:

She had evolved a kind of private commandment— those inaudible words were simply ‘I must not’—whenever the physical female implications of her body, sexual, menstrual, parturitional, tried to force an entry into her consciousness. But though one may keep the wolves from one’s door, they still howl out there in the darkness. Ernestina wanted a husband, wanted Charles to be that husband, wanted children; but the payment she vaguely divined she would have to make for them seemed excessive. (34)

Ernestina must play her proper female role. Her love for Charles is barely sexual, yet she knows that the price to pay is ‘excessive’, for she “wondered why God had permitted such a bestial version of Duty to spoil such an innocent longing” (35). Ernestina wonders, and as her name suggests ‘yearns’, but she never acts upon it, at least in the novel. Research related to female sexuality published in the Victorian age, among them “Woman in her Psychological Relations”, disprove of elements other than the female prudishness and her domestic role of protecting the ideals of femininity in that age which are beauty, grace, and love, and “the sage, the poet, the painter, see in women the type of excellence; the mirror of the divinest attributes of the Deity; the model of the good and the beautiful” (“Woman in her Psychological Relations” 18). However, she is never to be that ‘poet’ or ‘painter’. She is the object of admiration rather than the admirer. Her other role, in addition to being the moral statue that represents the Divine, is to produce healthy offspring and race that guarantees Man’s survival. Ernestina is, then, trying to occupy her naturally accepted (it can be even heroic) role in society, yet she acts upon her innocent desires even in a context of a marriage.

The important element that most critics ignore is that Ernestina has not been given enough experience in life (Charles is almost a decade older than her), and that these thoughts (quoted from the novel above) show that she has the potential to become authentic in the future. It all depends on her choices. The evidence for this claim is Sarah's former situation of naivety when she first meets the French lieutenant, Varguennes, and judges him "by the standards of Walter Scott and Jane Austen" (*FLW* 57). Sarah, here, is her former existentially inauthentic self. Like Clegg, she plays a role in her relation to Varguennes which leads to her own tragedy that is of great importance to attaining her existential freedom. Unlike Clegg, she has the potential to become a member of the Few because of her intelligence and insightfulness.

Ernestina is, in space of the plot provided by the omniscient narrator, inauthentic for she lacks the freedom and the good faith (in contrast to Sartre's 'bad faith') to act independently from her Victorian restraints, yet she is not present with the same ordeals other would-be authentic characters, like Sarah, Charles, Nicholas (from *The Magus*), and Miranda, do. All these characters have been inauthentic until they go through experiences that reshape their values into individualistic ones. Accordingly, Ernestina cannot belong to the category of the Many when she is a potential Few with the right experience. All we know is (through the hindsight of the narrator) that she ends up married and having many children but we know nothing of the nature of her choices. Ernestina does not belong to the Many, nor does she belong to the Few, in spite of her inauthenticity, and, accordingly, she makes the exception, amongst all of Fowles's characters, of falling in an indefinable space that has multiple endings which she deserves. The narrator sets Sarah and Charles free by allowing them three different ending, yet he denies Ernestina the privilege, but drawing the reader's attention to the fictionality of his story, the narrator is also giving the reader the freedom to imagine the

choices of the other characters who are potentially open for a life of authenticity. We might, as readers, believe then that Ernestina goes through the same experience Sarah goes through.

Although the narrator perceives Ernestina with an eye of a superior, his superiority is not that of disgust. His treatment of her is a treatment of a school teacher to an immature spoiled child. However, his perception of Mrs. Poulteney is that which combines sarcasm with disgust. Mrs. Poulterney is the ultimate incarnation of the Victorian woman with her venerated sense of duty and her absolute repulsion of desire, except for placing her authority above the rest. There is one particular character in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) that we can imagine would fit in the description provided by the narrator: Lady Catherine De Bourgh. They both exemplify class snobbery and pride. Their domineering and condescending attitudes towards people of middle and lower classes make of them a matriarchal model of the Victorian age. Fowles excels at portraying a similar model in Mrs. Poulterney who plays the role of the antagonist to Sarah.

After Sarah's tragedy, she is placed in Mrs. Poulterney's mansion as a tool for the latter's devotion to God's unfortunate subjects. Mrs. Poulterney accepts her in her house after a long persuading conversation by the vicar of Lyme who finds no other option for the melancholic Sarah but the "plump vulture" (25). As a result, the wild, free, and creative Sarah suffers the same predicament Miranda suffers. This places Sarah on the verge of another tragedy that is mainly caused by the opposition of Mrs. Poulterney's character to that of Sarah. While one values propriety and prohibits long walks of a young lady on her own outside the mansion, the other cherishes her freedom and her own company. Mrs. Poulterney shares with Clegg her inability to see the other as a complete whole. To her, there are but two obsessions: "one was Dirt—though she made some sort of exception of the kitchen, since only the servants lived there—and the other was Immorality. In neither field did anything untoward escape her eagle eye" (25). By immorality, and here is it capitalized by the author to indicate

religious immorality, Mrs. Poulterney does not mean her own. She does not only choose, inauthentically, a path chosen for her by her age and religion, but she is also passionate about this path since it puts her in a superior position to the others. Her choice is that of being egoistically superior to others by denying their freedom.

Sam Farrow in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* acts in the same way as Mrs. Poulterney and denies Charles his freedom of choice by meddling with his letter to Sarah, yet Sam, like Ernestina and unlike Mrs. Poulterney and Clegg, does not lack the intelligence that would place him in a lower position of extremity.<sup>7</sup> The burglar in the short story, "Poor Koko", shares with Sam his slyness and intelligence, yet he is inarticulate and fails, together with the owner of the house he breaks into, to communicate. The whole story is about a failure of communication and the language's inability to convey meaning. The narrator, an elderly writer, is trying through the story to understand the burglar's intention behind burning his manuscript on an important biography of Thomas Love Peacock, the most important work for the unnamed writer. The burglar has a quickness of mind as to understand that material property means nothing to his victim. Burning the book is an act of revenge for the inadequacy of the communication going on between them where the writer acts condescendingly, for he wishes "that they did not reject so many other things--such as a respect for language and intellectual honesty--because they mistakenly believe them to be shamefully bourgeois" (*ET* 156-7). This miscommunication is reminiscent of that of Miranda and Clegg; it is the recurrent (in Fowles's novels) conflict between the Many and the Few. The burglar is inarticulate and so he chooses the action of burning the only precious object in his enemy's life instead of challenging him linguistically and intellectually. Miranda is denied her freedom for the same reason; Fowles, accordingly, provides the reader with information about the key word of the title, 'Koko', which "is a Japanese word and means correct filial behaviour, the proper attitude of son to father" (184), and since the title is 'Poor Koko', that filial behavior is far from

correct. The father-son relation is poor and that is indicated by the son's action of burning the father's book. Both have different values of different generations. Fowles here is speaking of the new generational attitude towards language and class and how it is disdainful of the bourgeois and has taken revolution as a key to create justice (156).

Studying characters from Fowles's different fictional works has allowed us a clearer insight into the meaning of the inauthentic character. Most characters are inauthentic because they lack the potential character to be authentic, like the obsessive Clegg and Mrs. Poulterney; they both share a pathological conformity to a certain model they have created; however, Ernestina and the burglar show more intelligence. The latter is obviously choosing to act in the manner he does. Ernestina is quite young and is in conflict with the conventions of the society she lives in. Unlike Mrs. Poulterney, she is in opposition to those principles and is on the verge of a breakthrough. This review clarifies the difference between the Many and the inauthentic. Although Fowles makes us believe, in *The Aristos*, that the inauthentic is necessarily a member of the Many (lacking in intelligence and '[not] highly qualified to carry out any of the nobler human activities'), his fiction shows that to be inauthentic is a choice made by even those who are qualified to be better, yet they cannot be potential members of the Few unless they choose to go on a quest of finding their true selves and rid themselves of all imposed values (whether imposed by themselves or society).

## 2.2.The Potential Few: The Inauthenticity of the Intellectual Man

This section deals with the potential Few. The potential Few cannot be the Many since they have initial values that give them credit before their full membership to the Few. The potential Few are "a kind of self-questioning [and] ethical elite" (*FLW* 285). Simon Loveday conceptualizes the term as 'pre-Few' and describes the members chosen by Fowles as "belonging to a superior class, to be superior to their fellows" (149). These potentially Few (pre-Few or elects, as Conchis terms them) characters are not yet 'aristoi' but they have the

full conditions that allow their eligibility.<sup>8</sup> They are even ready to go through quests to find who they are. The aristos is, as we have dealt with in the first chapter, a supreme being who cannot fit in a conforming society where his individuality is in danger and who gains a state of being that allows him complete independence from whatever concept imposed on him. The potential few do not fit in and cannot be categorized as the Many, but they have to find their true selves to be called 'aristos'. The characters who match the description are Miranda from *The Collector*, Nicholas from *The Magus*, Williams from "The Ebony Tower", and Charles from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. These are not the only characters but they are the most important since they are also the protagonists of these works of fiction. Part of their personality is to be analyzed in this section, but their success into becoming full members of the Few will be dealt with in the next chapter, except for Miranda and Williams.<sup>9</sup>

The exception of excluding Miranda from the Few is partly because of her death at the end of the novel which does not allow her full membership. Yet her failure does not place her any close to the Many since her struggle to achieve authenticity is an honest one. Miranda is the only female protagonist in Fowles's works to go through a quest of achieving existential freedom, for other female characters are models of inspiration rather than journey-takers. Catherine, in "The Cloud", has not achieved authenticity and seems to be uninterested. Having the right social and intellectual background (a scholarship-winner art student and an upper middle class citizen), makes Miranda superior to her captor, Clegg. However, the potential Few have their faults that should be overcome at first and Miranda's are her conformist society of 'Ladymont' and being "a prig, a liberal-humanist snob, like so many university students" (A 10); Fowles adds that "if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately needs" (10). While Clegg's inauthenticity is described as "pathetic", Miranda's is "tragic" (Acheson 11). Fowles asserted that Miranda is "an existential heroine although she doesn't know it. She is groping for her own authenticity

[and] her tragedy is that she will never live to achieve it. Her triumph is that one day she would have done so” (Vipond 8). However, it is rare that we are given glimpses of heroes or heroines’ lives after their quests. We are mostly given resolutions. Thus, maybe that is the reason why Fowles changes his thematic interests in his late fiction. Authenticity is not as static in nature and it changes according to subjective experiences that can annihilate former assumptions based on former experiences.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Miranda’s new self is to be doubted even if it is a promising one. However, what is attractive about Miranda is rather her ‘groping’ nature, her potentiality.

What makes Miranda inauthentic at first is her lack of freedom. Her comfortable life of popularity and personal success forbids her to see through her conventional upbringing and her friends’ pretentiousness. Her imprisonment is a tragic accident that sets her ideals right: “There’s only one way to do things: The right way. Not what they meant by ‘the Right Way’ at Ladymont. But the way you feel is right. My own right way” (C 245). In her diary, Miranda writes to herself to understand more about her situation and to evoke her past life, especially her relation to George Paston (G.P.). She starts by describing her taste of style and relations: “I have this silly notion about English good looks. Advertisement men” (181). Her father is a doctor and her family plays golf. She, like Clegg, is also a product of her own social group, for she, as she confesses, enjoyed the company of her proud friends and never thought of changing it. Her attraction to her aunt’s ex-boyfriend, the fortyish artist, G.P., was rather denied since it did not meet the ‘suitability’ for her social group. Through her diary, Miranda tries to determine her own true feelings independently. She “scrutinizes all her most basic assumptions, and makes some progress towards achieving existential freedom” (Acheson 7). Her encounter with Clegg and her captivity make her revalue her priorities and appreciate life at its best way.

Miranda's struggle to cope with her new situation is a real challenge, not because she is in a place of a victim, but also because she is the worst victim for such a situation. Being an artist and an intellectual in Caliban's cell puts Miranda's fortitude to the test. The disparity of class and character between the two characters and her physical and psychological weaknesses frustrate her attempts to free herself at first. Miranda's failure, thus, is her presumption of her own social and intellectual superiority to Clegg. She sees Clegg only as her social inferior and attributes the role of Caliban, instead of what he wants, Ferdinand, to him. She takes up the role of Prospero, the magician and the teacher to Caliban in *The Tempest*, instead of tricking Caliban into assuming her role as Miranda: "I'm so superior to him. I know this sounds wickedly conceited. But I *am*. And so it's Ladymont and Boadicea and *noblesse oblige* all over again. I feel I've got to show him how decent human beings live and behave. He is ugliness. But you can't smash human ugliness" (C 137) and so she has not; Clegg 'smashes' her beauty instead. Clegg's ugliness, lack of taste with his "stupid crawling imitation of the bourgeoisie" (221), and lack of understanding add further to Miranda's sense of supremacy, for she asserts that indeed she is a member of the Few and he is a member of the 'New People', "the new class people with their cars and their money and their tellies and their stupid vulgarities" (221). Miranda's failure lies in imposing her morals of freedom on Clegg; she starts teaching him about art and beauty and forgets to be compassionate to him or to teach him about how to recognize other people's right to be free.

All what Miranda offers, instead, is pity. And pity leaves Clegg residing in the same inferior position he is assigned to:

Violence and force are wrong. If I use violence I descend to his level. It means that I have no real belief in the power of reason, and sympathy and humanity. That I lameduck people only because it flatters me, not because I believe they need my sympathy. I've been thinking back to Ladymont, to people I

lameducked there. Sally Margison. I lameducked her just to show the Vestal Virgins that I was cleverer than they. That I could get her to do things for me that she wouldn't do for them. (245)

We can see here that Miranda is already making progress by understanding that her former behavior of 'lameducking' is wrong, yet her comparison of Sally Margison to Clegg is in itself a misunderstanding of her situation. She is dealing with Clegg in relation to her project of becoming more generous towards herself and not towards the other. Again, her existential project is a form of categorizing the victims of her condescending attitudes and the improvement she is making in annihilating the latter. Clegg is but a mission since after deciding to 'teach' him, she uses a series of negations that accentuate her sense of condescendence: "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" (245). And so Miranda's methodology is to fantasize herself a Prospero "and treats him with the same combination of contempt and kindness as Prospero does in the play" (Acheson 11) and an Emma, from Austen's *Emma* (1815), and "arranges a marriage for him, [a type of] little Harriet Smith, with whom he could be mousy and sane and happy" (C 229). Like Emma, and this is a point she is rather ignorant of, Miranda commits the error of misinterpreting her surroundings' feelings and complexity and focuses instead on "her own narcissistic desire to see in others only a set of reflections of herself" (Punter 72). The same desire occurs when she plays the fairytale role of 'Beauty' in "Beauty and the Beast" and imagines "kiss[ing] the beast" to free herself from his captive (256).

Miranda, by playing different roles of fictional characters, denies herself the opportunity of actually bonding with Clegg as he is and understanding his unique and pathetic situation that deserves more than condescending sympathy. Her fictional role is an incarnation of a bridge to gap the influence of G.P.'s rather sophisticated and promiscuous self to the

ignorant and impotent Clegg. As one might expect, the connection fails to be incarnated. Her decision to offer herself to Clegg, although it is seen by Loveday as a “growing capacity to overcome her prudishness [and a way of] overcoming the physical repugnance she feels for G.P.” (25), represents her final sentence and last chance to comprehend the role Clegg is imposing on her. Her fantasy world rejects Clegg as a complex being who is playing the role of a “Prince Charming” (254) rather than the villain, Caliban. However, the act does show that Miranda is learning and is open for new experiences that would enlighten her out of her Ladymont ways, for while she ‘pities’ him, he ‘forgives’ her. She, after all, accepts responsibly for her actions and guilt (especially in her relation to G.P.) instead of denying them. Her best virtue is brute honesty, and this is the best existential quality according to Sartre.

Miranda’s love for G.P. is as unreasonable as Clegg and G.P.’s love for her. As readers, we are not convinced that what Miranda feels for G.P. is the type of love Clegg is incapable of. She describes it at first as a type of ‘game’, a ‘chessgame’. The word ‘chess’ is mentioned nine times in the novel, mainly by Miranda, and she compares her relation to him as a chessgame twice: “we seemed to communicate through the chessmen, there was something very symbolic about my winning” (188). Miranda at last says that her winning was symbolic and that “losing is winning” (188). This reminds us of the game played by Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest* and how, through the game, they are declaring their love to each other. What is absent to their minds is that they are controlled by Prospero and that they are themselves in his ultimate game of chess which restores his authority over Ferdinand’s father, Alonso. By marrying them, Prospero denies Alonso the opportunity of wrecking his kingdom since his son is an heir in it, so their game is not really a game of love; it is a game of power. G.P. is not Ferdinand and neither is Clegg; the latter is Caliban and the former is Prospero. One is a collector of butterflies, and eventually of women, and the other is a

collector of women. Miranda, with Clegg, plays the role of G.P., Prospero, with her, for he “is entirely absorbed in his own cultural superiority, his denial of the everyday, his assertion that the imperatives of art must at all times take precedence over human feeling” (Punter 70). Miranda’s diary is imprisoned by G.P.’s ideas about life and art, and his influence is even more brutal than Clegg’s since Miranda claims superiority over the latter. She describes her feelings when G.P. criticized her works coldly with: “as if he had turned and hit me with his fist” and “it hurt like a series of slaps across the face” (C 167). While Clegg is rawly cruel, G.P. is even more brutal since Miranda’s relation to him brings her no self-satisfaction except when she learns that he loves her.

The reader, as a result, doubts the originality of Miranda since her ideas are all informed by G.P. and they are mostly never independent from his influence. She even judges Clegg according to the sensibilities of intellect taught by G.P. although this contradicts his conception of authenticity, for “he once lived under the shadow of Braque and suddenly woke up one morning to realize that all he had done for five years was a lie, because it was based on Braque’s eyes and sensibilities and not his own” (172). And so Miranda goes against this recommendation and uses G.P.’s ‘eyes and sensibilities’ to see Clegg. Miranda is, thus, physically and intellectually imprisoned by both and her freedom becomes more fictional than real. Miranda’s idealization of G.P. is reminiscent of Clegg’s idealization of her, and she then commits her second major mistake after her condescendence. She falls victim of her own immaturity.

Miranda’s style in writing differs drastically from that of Clegg’s in that it is honest and forward. It is a diary style evocative of that of Daniel Defoe’s *Robison Crusoe* (1719) which is a biography in the form of a journal that Crusoe keeps to console himself with a hopeful account of escaping his predicament. Miranda’s diary is rather strengthened by the nature of its audience. While Clegg writes as if on a trial, Miranda writes to herself: “Minny,

I'm not writing to you, I'm talking to myself" (134). However, the fact that she mentions her sister means that she might be writing to her. It still makes her diary more honest since she is writing "for someone she loves" (Loveday 22).

Even when she 'cheats', for she creates conversations between herself and Clegg and develops smart arguments, she confesses that she "didn't say all these things — but I'm going to write what I want to say as well as what I did" (C 141). This goes as far as the imagined conversation between Caliban and Miranda takes place. She entitles these conversations as "Dialogue Between Miranda and Caliban". This 'cheating' does not affect her diary's reliability; it shows a character of spontaneity and openness in it, which is a main characteristic in dairies. Miranda writes the events when they appear on the day and the accounts and her reflections cover, unlike the closeness of Clegg's memoir which is written in the past, the present and the future. This indicates that she rarely sums up detailed events as Clegg does, but she is rather immersed in her thoughts and ideas: "I'm thinking hours before each sentence I write" (254). However, her actions and ideas are sometimes at extreme opposition. When she hits Clegg with an axe, he smartly, although this shrewdness escapes her, criticizes her action by stating that he "thought pacifists didn't believe in hurting people"; she answers with a 'shrug' and 'litting a cigarette' (149).

The critic Katherine M. Tarbox adds a very important element to the narrative of Miranda which is the existence of a variety of characters that enriches its realism: "Her diary contains a refreshingly large cast of characters whom she looks upon with warmth. While Clegg's thoughts sink, hers soar. She compensates for her confinement by imagining and remembering. Seclusion teaches her that she has a bond with 'the people on the Tube', who before she had always treated with condescension" ("A Critical Study in the Novels of John Fowles" 55). The people whom she thinks of as inferior in the start of her diary are now fellow human companions; she is even thankful for Clegg's company at times. Her need for human

interaction makes her see the difference, and the importance of the difference, between many people in her past life. The deprivation of contact with humans makes appreciate even the least human in her life. This is the knowledge that Miranda will find useful if she is to be let free; it is in here that her tragedy lies: in finally understanding an existence beyond hers. This is what makes her different from G.P., what makes her more generous.

At the end, Miranda relinquishes her imagination and fantastic role playing and decides to identify more with, not just one Anne Frank, but a multitude of ‘Anne Franks’ who share the same human quandary through history: “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” (C 238-9). This is the only role that does not put Miranda in a position of a savor to Clegg. She is not giving up here; she is rather sensing her end and knowing it would free. Miranda finally finds her true self and it is only at the end that she gives up both God and G.P., indicating a certain similarity of tyranny between both.

Miranda’s approach to life has been similar, in theory, to her approach to art. While Clegg’s voyeuristic art declares his passion for possessing, Miranda’s love for painting signifies her fondness for the representational feature of that art and its ability to liberate its object by creating an individual value. She tries to teach Clegg, through the same knowledge she was taught by G.P., that “when you draw something it lives and when you photograph it it dies” (55), yet she, like Clegg, photographs as G.P. tells her that she is “using a camera. Just as *trompe-l’oeil* is mischannelled photography, so is painting in someone else’s style. You’re photographing here. That’s all” (169). Miranda fails to achieve her place as an authentic artist as she does as an authentic individual and all she affords is theoretical commandments about life and art that seem to be dictated by John Fowles himself.<sup>11</sup> Cooper states that even when Miranda’s symbolic death might indicate her freedom, it nevertheless “suggests an act of

authorial control akin to Clegg's" for he is the only one who is responsible, along with Fowles, for plotting her death (46). And so as the victim of the three male authoritative figures (Clegg, G.P., and Fowles), Miranda does not stand a chance of developing from an art student to a professional artist. The idea of the possibility of a mature female artist in Fowles's works will be dealt with further in the next section.

Like Miranda, Nicholas Urfe from *The Magus* is a potential Few who excels at role playing and is proud of his superior social status. However, he has another feature which is purely male that distinguishes him from most of Fowles's characters: emotional detachment and selfishness. He is also proud of the latter since he mistakes selfishness for existential freedom. Nicholas is the novel's only narrator and it has three essential parts that are based on the physical quest that he takes. The first part recounts Nicholas's life in England, his tedious experiences after his parents' death, and his relationship with Alison; the second recounts his most fruitful experience in Greece and meeting the magus, Conchis; the third recounts his return to England and his existential maturity. Naturally, the part we shall be dealing with here is Nicholas's existential inauthenticity and potentiality which parallels his experiences before he gains existential freedom; that is before he goes to Greece. His first days in Greece (and even some of the experiences in Bourani) are also important in discussing Nicholas's failure at first since they spare him of the comforts of the conventional life in England. They answer the question of whether Nicholas is really what he claims to be or not, for he does claim that he is authentic and that is the real first reason for his departure, because he could no longer stand the life he is born into. With his father being a brigadier and his mother an obedient housewife, the typical "model of a would-be major-general's wife" (*M* 15), Nicholas "realized that what was really wrong with my parents was that they had nothing but a blanket of contempt for the sort of life I wanted to lead" (16). This annihilates his claim of being capable of leading that life in spite of his parents and so when their plane crashes, he "felt an almost

immediate sense of relief, of freedom” (16). The way Nicholas lives after his parents’ death gives him a sense of complacency and a desire to experience the exotic. In Oxford, he, together with some friends of his, founds a club called ‘Les Hommes Révoltés’ and plays the role of the authentic existentialist:

There we argued about being and nothingness 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. (17)

It is clear, in the above quote, where the sentimental perspective Nicholas imposes on reality comes from. He confesses later that the reason for playing such a role is to be “different” from the rest (17). In addition to condemning others, mainly his parents, for being inauthentic and an obstacle for his freedom, his discourse puts him in the position of a victim. After leaving Oxford, he takes a teaching position (his father leaves him with no inheritance) in a public school in East Anglia. The problem of Nicholas here is his lack of understanding of what he really wants. He feels trapped and bored in this school, yet that does not change when he joins the Lord Byron School in Phraxos, Greece, although as readers we think that his boredom lies in the grim “claustrophobic town” only (18). It seems later that Nicholas’s choice of career is what bores him; however, even the writer is unaware of it since he is proud, in a way, of Nicholas’s fruitful journey to Greece.

The only thing Nicholas is sure about is his ambition to become a poet. This is actually what brings him closer to Miranda, yet there are qualities in him that make him resemble Clegg (less extremely though) more. Cooper believes that Fowles moves the extremity of

Clegg to a moderate version of Caliban that is reconciling to the Ferdinand persona; that is from Clegg's "sick sexuality" to "congenial promiscuity" and from "his hostile anti-social impulses" to "a somewhat less aggressive melodramatic wish to project himself as the eternal solitary" (56-7). However, possessing the right social and educational background makes Nicholas a dearer version to Fowles, yet "instead of striving to refine his potentialities, he leads a self-absorbed, inauthentic life as modish aesthete and reckless collector of girlfriends" (Onega 25). Nicholas keeps his self-deception and his misused existential motto of freedom as a way to detach himself emotionally from all his experienced relationships with women, just as he does with his parents, thinking that emotional involvement and domestic life will ruin his artistic and cynical solitary life.

Nicholas confesses later that he is not completely honest with these women although he has always used his 'masks' to deceive them into liking him. His method to attract girls is to "make a show of unpredictability, cynicism, and indifference. Then, like a conjurer with his white rabbit, I produced the solitary heart" (*M* 21). Later, for he plans his games in the vacations, and before their end, he would "leave the scene of the crime" and reveal "the Chesterfieldian mask instead" (21), describing his method as 'neat' and emphasizing the immorality of the act. Nicholas, the conjurer, meets later Conchis, the magus, and has a taste of his own medicine, yet before that he is surprised to be unmasked by Alison, the only girlfriend who reads through his masks ("she didn't fall for the solitary heart" (35)) and pushes him to see life as it is: complex and uncontrived. Nicholas's inauthenticity lies mainly in creating symbols and roles that reflect a type of an ordered perspective on the complexity of life. That is the reason why Conchis later asks him to surrender to his masks instead of obsessively interpreting them. However, this comes at odds with the aim of existentialism: to find meaning. Nicholas's way to create masks is wrong since they hide a reality that needs to be scrutinized; yet abandoning the mission of finding meaning is also inexistential. Are we

thus to believe that both Nicholas and Conchis, his mentor, are wrong? This will be further dealt with in relation to the character of Conchis in the next chapter, since he is, according to Fowles, already at a stage of an authentic being, almost a god.

Accordingly, Nicholas's character can be more understood in relation to the women he loves in the novel. There are mainly two women who are put into contrast, by Nicholas and by the author. The first is Alison, the Australian girl he meets before he leaves for his new job in Greece. The second is Lilly/Julie whom he meets in Bourani and who is an actress in Conchis's masks. Although Nicholas knows that her role as Lilly is fake, he has no knowledge of her act as Julie and so he falls in love with the role. The two women, being too different, further increase the symbolic intensity of his split self: his 'homme révolté' self and his Victorian Englishness. He describes his relationship with Alison in terms of teaching an ignorant child on how to act properly: "Out of bed I felt I was teaching her, anglicizing her accent, polishing off her roughnesses, her provincialisms" (35). While he makes us believe that it is a reciprocated didactic relationship, for she is the one who is more authentic 'in bed', in his relation to Julie, the perfect English model of a woman, he is even more thrilled to teacher her about sexuality and is rather fond of her innocent virginity. We can see how Clegg is present here with the presence of the Madonna/whore complex that even Nicholas is condemned with.

What Nicholas feels towards Alison is defeat, his own emotional defeat. His Englishness, although at many times he claims that he denies it, is prevailing and that shows through his effort to change and polish Alison's ways and his fondness for Julie's accent, manners, and proper education. One of the reasons for Nicholas's masks is his Englishness, his ability "to conceal [his] true feelings not only from others but from [himself] as well" (Acheson 22). Accordingly, Alison's ability to express her emotions repulses him; she prudishly observes: "You're not me. You can't feel like I feel" (*M* 34). Alison's feeling self

and her Australian accent and manners are enough reasons for Nicholas to think of her as an inferior match to his sophisticated self.

After Nicholas's escape from Alison, he meets Julie (Lilly at first) and she represents everything he fantasizes a perfect woman should be: beautiful (in an English way), a Cambridge graduate, well-mannered, and innocent. He is superior to her sexually and that gives him a sort of pleasure; her emotions are rarely construed which adds to that pleasure. She is the mystery he is looking for. What she really represents is Nicholas's inauthentic middle class hypocrisy that is still inherent in him. She also represents his imprisoned conventionality that he tries to mask with his selfish and fake conception of existentialism. In the middle of his experiences under Conchis's mask, Alison visits him in Greece and he reluctantly, at first, meets up with her. They visit Parnassus and while at first he lies to her about having syphilis in order to spare himself the hypocrisy of making love to someone he thinks he does not love (and by now he is 'faithfully' attached to Julie), he later realizes that he also loves Alison: "I wanted to keep her *and* I wanted to keep – or find – Julie. 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" (269). Still, there is a kind of emotional dishonesty since his desire for both women is not accurately argued for. He loves one because she comes from the same background and makes of him the man he wants to be (which is 'a romantic hero' since he still has to 'find' her) and the other because she is brutally honest emotionally. This schizophrenic desire is symbolic of Nicholas's split self and existential inauthenticity. When Nicholas tells Alison that there is another woman and she makes a scene at the hotel, he feels his English self restored again and declares that he "hated her then; her lack of control, her hysteria" (276), and as readers we are puzzled at Nicholas's lack of emotional maturity, for neither his love for Alison nor his love for Julie convinces us as true and honest since they are both linked to his

fantasy world. Two scenes in the novel illustrate this: the suicide scene and his reaction to the staged death of Alison.

The suicide attempt comes after Nicholas's first realization of his inadequacy as a poet and his false diagnosis of syphilis in Greece. He fails at the action but he understands that he "would never kill" himself, "however hollow I became, however diseased" (62). At this point Nicholas also realizes his own inauthenticity, for he tries "to commit not a moral action, but a fundamentally aesthetic one .... It was a Mercutio death I was looking for, not a real one" (62). The action is never achieved because it is not wholly believed in since it is a result of a wounded ego (he decides it after realizing that he is not a good poet); it is simply romanticized. Nicholas feels rather depressed in Greece after his intense relationship with Alison in London and the newness and exoticism of Greece shocks him into unfamiliarity and instead of surrendering to the meaninglessness it offers, he sets himself to interpret his depression in terms of suicide. The attempt is nothing but "an artistic, self-indulgent one" (Bedggood 52). Nicholas starts to doubt his own honesty: "To write poetry and to commit suicide, apparently so contradictory, had really been the same, attempts at escape" (*M* 62-3) and so he escapes through masks of several fictionalizations.

In this respect, Nicholas is similar to Miranda in that they both literalize reality into fiction. While Miranda believes that she is Prospero and her success would be to save Clegg with her almost 'magical' powers (since she sees that she is superior to him), Nicholas believes Conchis to be Prospero and that he would be the one who would grant him his Miranda (Julie in the story). Thus, Nicholas sees himself as a Ferdinand to Julie whom he thinks of as an "extinct Lawrentian woman of the past" (242), reducing her to a tableau of mysterious fictionality, refusing to see her for what she is, an actress in Conchis's mask.

While Nicholas has been playing the role of the conjurer with his women, he has also been setting fictional roles of grandeur to survive in Bourani's mythical setting; among these

fictional characters are Robinson Crusoe, Joseph K. in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, Marlow in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Hamlet in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Pip in Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, and most importantly Theseus, the famous Greek mythical hero, among many other personal allusions. Nicholas's failure lies, thus, in how he "deforms the world, himself and others with his obsessive narrative activities. To see or be the story he must bracket what he sees and edit material that does not fit his preconceptions" ("Narrative and Image in *The Magus*" 78). Although Nicholas knows that Bourani is a world of fiction, he nevertheless forces meaning into it by creating symbols out of actions and objects. This is the main reason why Nicholas prefers Julie's mysteriousness over Alison's mundaneness. The first allows him the importance of interpreter while he is annoyed with the latter's "inability to hide behind metaphor" which "ought to offend [him]; to bore [him] as uncomplex poetry normally bored [him]" (*M* 266). What Nicholas fails to see is that Alison is not, as Julie, playing a role that would please his desire for the 'Lawrentian woman'. This further accentuates his inauthenticity. His failure indicates an inability to be what he ought to be: his own mundane self. What he is, instead, doing is playing the role of a romantic hero in a Romance. Condemning Alison is similar to his initial act of condemning his parents. They are all wrong for the role he wants to play which is not as he claims it to be; that is not the existentialist.

We have referred earlier to two scenes in the novel that illustrate Nicholas's link to fantastic world rather than the real. The first, as argued, is his suicide attempt. The second is his reaction to the staged death of Alison. Receiving the letter, Nicholas's reception of the news of Alison's suicide fills him with guilt since their last experience makes him realize that he loves Alison as much as he loves Julie. However, we doubt the comparison made since he imposes an aesthetic value on it as he has with his own attempt of suicide. Two days after the shocking news, he "begun to edge it out of the moral world into the aesthetic, where it was

easier to live with” (401). This easiness defines the relationship that he has with the mysterious Julie which leaves for him spaces and gaps to be filled by his capacity to narrate.

The most important role Nicholas plays (among the roles in the list above) is Theseus. The reason lies in that even the author seems to net his story over it. Bourani is in itself a mythical labyrinthine to be searched. In one of Conchis’s masks, Julie plays the role of Ariadne and the black man the role of the Minotaur. Nicholas, as a result, hastes to read himself as the hero to be saved, Theseus, only he has to be guided through the labyrinthine with the thread left by Ariadne. This is of course what Nicholas understands of the mask. However, the mask reverses it into its opposite course to teach Nicholas about the absurdities of life. Ariadne is supposed to be Alison who is actually left by Nicholas (the way Ariadne is left by Theseus in an abandoned island after helping him through the labyrinthine). Alison is a teacher of virtual life while Julie is a student of Nicholas’s fantastic imagination. This is further emphasized when he, after hearing she was married to a homosexual, “assigns himself the part of Prince Charming who will satisfy her every sexual desire” (Acheson 28). This reminds us again of Clegg and the Miranda he wants instead of the Miranda there is. They both fantasize about the female Eve who has a sexual aloofness that only a mother possesses. And so Nicholas shares Clegg’s inauthenticity more than he does with Miranda.

The magical world Nicholas has been creating all his life comes to a fictional reality by the masks performed by the actors Conchis employs. He gets the opportunity he wishes for before meeting Alison and leaving London for Greece: “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” (*M* 19). Thus, he defines the existential in terms of ‘newness’; his eradication of all that is known for him is not a freedom from convention; it is emotional detachment and selfishness since Alison has not tried to impose on Nicholas the self he has imposed on her. However, unlike Clegg, Nicholas is able to see through these flaws as he is,

unlike Miranda, freed from the godgame imposed on him by Conchis. He is after all a potential Few and his intelligence and artistic skills allow him to develop into an aristos. His emotional development will be further dealt with in the next chapter.

Another member of the Few who shares with Nicholas the same artistic skills and intelligence is David Williams from Fowles's "The Ebony Tower". Williams is a young painter and art critic who visits Henry Breasley, an accomplished elderly painter with a peculiar character, with the mission to write his biography. Breasley lives in a secluded place in the French country, Brittany, with two girls, Anne and Diana. Dianna, whom he calls "Mouse" which is another variation of (with an addition of an 'o') the word 'muse' as Breasley tells Williams, is a capable painter too. However, she serves in the text as both Breasley and Williams's muse. She also interprets her mentor's language since Breasley is incapable of expressing his ideas the way Williams is. His inarticularity has nothing to do with that of Clegg; he is rather articulate in expressing himself with paint rather than words. Williams's fault lies in his articulation with words rather than paint.

Williams is thus mesmerized by, not just the setting and Breasley's freedom, but also his muse. He acts very carefully at first (maybe all along the story) and makes sure to stay faithful to his wife and children. What he discovers in Breasley's exotic place is an alternative to the safe life he has been leading. He understands that in order to be a successful and authentic artist, he has to sacrifice the moral safety he has knitted around him and instill an invigorating power which lies in mystery. There is a certain contradiction in here. While moral responsibility is celebrated in *The Magus*, it is rather denounced in "The Ebony Tower" for its alternative, freedom. The difference between Nicholas and Williams can be a valid answer to the contradiction. Nicholas's fondness for magic has the same edgy extremity that Williams has for fear of it. Fowles here is stressing the importance of nourishing a good artist's genius in the same way he is of nourishing the moral responsibility a man has to obtain.

Williams's inauthenticity lies, not in the choice he makes, but in his passivity and inability to decide. Although we know that Williams expresses himself in art in abstraction, Breasley argues that the abstraction is a cover up, a fear "to be clear" (ET 53). The expression describes Williams's art and life: "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" (109). Williams's paintings reflect his 'hollow' life and lack of passion that lies in his former choices. We discover more about this 'nothingness' in the way he describes his family which he does with no feeling or compassionate attachment. His family is but an obligation, a safe choice to live a safe life.

What Williams excels at is not his abstractions but rather his place in the academia. He is an intellectual and Breasley believes that "painters should not be intellectuals" (79). Williams is an idea man and it remains like that to the end of the novel. He fantasizes about leaving his wife and joining Diana in France to teach him more, the way Alison and Sarah in *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* do, about desire, freedom, and authenticity. Yet it all remains in his thoughts: "But he had never really had, or even attempted to give himself, the far greater existential chance. He had had doubts about his work before; but not about his own fundamental nature, or at any rate that there was not in it the potential wherewithal to lay the ghost that profoundly haunts every artist: his lastingness" (109). The potential to become a more authentic individual and artist lies in choosing Diane since he knows she has the stirring mystery that would empower his art and guarantee its 'lastingness'. It is a personal satisfaction that Breasley finds in his life that empowers his art. His secluded commitment to his art is not apologetic. He invests in his emotions and instincts and considers the moral life what Williams conceptualizes as a "dead end" (109). Williams, according to this "extravagantly Byronic view of the artist", has no "chance. Either his art

does not express his personality, or – worse still, in view of the quality of his work – it does” (Loveday 94). Fowles is, thus, condemning Williams for his choices; Williams ends up by going back to his wife and lamenting the deprivation of passion and his last chance as an artist to grow.

There is nothing wrong with Williams’s final choice if it has been what he wants or at least what he chooses, yet it is Diane who makes the choice of reading Williams. She makes all the initiatives (the idea of the night walk, the embrace, and ending the relation) and “is able to perceive and to describe the force that keeps her and David apart, and to act in a way that preserves her integrity” (92). Williams is rather passive and is able to only respond to her actions. Loveday believes that “it is hardly to his credit that he manages to remain faithful to his wife” (93). Williams remains a potential Few, although he is never a Many, and fails at authenticating his life and art. Miranda partly fails by dying (although it is the cause of hazard) while he fails by choice.

Williams is not the only character that fails to mature from his Many to his Few. The list includes other characters from *The Ebony Tower* which brings the collection closer to realism than Fowles’s former fiction. Fowles grew more curious about the characters’ failure to communicate and the nature of fiction than with their success to develop existentially. In “Poor Koko”, the unnamed narrator ends the story only by hypothesizing about the behavior of the burglar but never reaching any concrete knowledge of the act. The elderly man does not understand the cruel act of burning his precious book, but at the end he understands that his humanism was an offense against the young man’s Marxist principles and his ‘disrespect for “language and intellectual honesty” (157). The narrator’s snobbish condescendence is similar to that of Miranda (towards Clegg), yet Fowles, for the first time, frowns upon it when the narrator confesses that he “was guilty of a deafness” (183).

Catherine in “The Cloud”, Fowles’s last and most complex short story in the collection, is also suffering from a failure to communicate with the world around her. Unlike Fowles’s former fiction, “The Cloud” does not portray any development from the inauthentic to the authentic and thus does not allow a growth from being a potential Few to the Few. Catherine is represented as someone who is suffering from depression because of the suicide of her husband; during her trip with her sister’s family and friends, she does not even try to repair, nor understand, the situation. She adds to her existential condemnation two other inauthentic acts in the story. The first is telling her nieces a fairytale about a princess that is saved by a handsome prince, expressing her wish to be saved by an alternative to her husband; this is evidenced by her envy to her sister, Annabel, who is happily married to Paul. Catherine, like Miranda and Nicholas, plays roles that annihilate her personal uniqueness and creates an inauthentic yearning for a fictional solution (Acheson 59). The second act lies in finding that fictional incarnation in the most irritating and selfish character in the story, Peter, yet she is aware of it and uses him temporarily as a replacement. Catherine’s frantic ways to find a solution to her depression comes to an end when she parts with the group by staying behind and disappearing in the woods, leaving “a mysterious cloud, the kind of cloud one will always remember because it is so anomalous, so uncorresponding with the weather knowledge” (*ET* 297). The cloud is most significant of Catherine’s probable suicide, an act ‘so anomalous’ with the group’s cheerful summer-like weather.

Although the potential Few have the capacity to grow, unlike members of the Many, several of them choose inauthentically. This is rather more sinister than when the Many fail because they use their intelligence and their social superiority to the Many for selfish, or uncreative, ends that would further emphasize the division between these two categories. Clegg and the burglar are social outcasts and their relation to the potential Few adds more evil

to their character. Catherine's act of suicide is an aesthetic choice that puts other interests in life, especially those related to power, at the hand of the inauthentic Peter.

### 2.3. The Potential Feminist: Masculine Versus Feminine Creativity

Fowles's main characters are artists or potential artists and their journeys to achieve authenticity are linked to their journeys as creative artists. The product of art is only a celebrated product when it is manufactured by a male artist. That does not mean that female characters are not creative. It only means that their creativity is in itself a background (and nothing more) for the male artist's imagination, for it is mostly passive and inarticulate. Fowles's intention is rather the opposite. He believes that the masculine is inferior to the feminine sensibilities. In many interviews, he declares that men rather need the help of women to find themselves and to rid themselves of that coarse masculinity that makes them rigid and more in touch with their rationality than with their creative sensibility. He finds in women "a civilising influence on men" (Acheson 2). He believes that a healthy society is a society that finds a balance of relations between the sexes while its 'sickness' "arises from the selfish tyranny of male" because men stand for "conservatism" and morality while women stand for "progress", "innovation and experiment" (A 165-6). Bruce Woodcock, in *Male Mythologies: John Fowles and Masculinity*, confirms this contrast by stating that "The biggest obstacle to any progressive change in social relations is quite clearly men themselves [, for] war, violence, competitiveness, distorted sexuality and social exploitation [are] the products of patriarchy in itself, or patriarchy in its capitalist form" (7). According to Fowles, the most innovative artists and thinkers belong to a category of men or women who find the right balance between the two.

However, he finds women superior for a reason. A woman is able to teach while a man is only able to receive that knowledge, for "they know more about human nature, more about mystery, and more about keeping passion alive" (95). The teacher, accordingly, is a woman,

yet most of the mentors in the fiction of Fowles are men. Sarah Woodruff is the only exception and, in comparison to other male mentors, she lacks the power to become a successful artist according to many critics. He confesses in one of his interviews that his portrayal of women and his sympathy for “the female principle” do “not always tie in with modern feminism. My wife would deny point blank that I’m a proper feminist. But I do, more for obscure personal reasons, hate the macho viewpoint” (*Conversations with John Fowles* 165). Although the subject of each of his male characters is a woman, that woman is more of the Romance’s ‘*princesse lointaine*’ model than a teacher.<sup>12</sup> The female characters in Fowles’s fiction work more as muses than as teachers or artists.

Fowles’s ideas behind his feminine and masculine creations are Carle Jung’s theory of the anima. He believes men and women possess their components of both the feminine and the masculine and what defines a man’s journey towards existential authenticity is vitally related to finding his own feminine principle. Although men take such journeys in his fiction, women do not. The stated reason lies in making his female characters successfully authentic from the start, yet the reason for that authenticity is always obscure since his female characters are mysterious creatures that are a “romantic ideal”: “elusive and tantalizing, enigmatic and contradictory, resonant with loss and desire” (Cooper 131). Female characters are rather mythicized into a male’s anima. This adds mystery and power in an artist’s (also a thinker’s) journey. This idea is embodied mostly in Sarah Woodruff, which explains the feminists’ attraction to the novel, yet it first starts with Fowles’s first novel, *The Collector*, and continues to instigate his male characters through all his fiction.

In *The Collector*, Miranda is Fowles’s first and last female narrator yet her narrative is, pretty much like herself, imprisoned by the narrative of the novel’s collector, Clegg. Accordingly, the themes that prevail are those of imprisonment, possession, and collecting. The themes are linked to masculine morality and they are rather condemned by Fowles and his

mentors in his fiction. In *The Magus*, Conchis asserts that collecting “extinguishes the moral instinct. The object finally possesses the possessor” (*M* 178). Collecting, or categorizing, is a “vice exclusively associated with men” (Loveday 5). Characters like Clegg, De Deukans, Nicholas (and even G.P. since he shares with Nicholas the pleasure of collecting women), and Charles (who collects Fossils) are condemned for having such a character and are tested to overcome it and see what they try to possess (especially when it is a human being) as free unclassifiable essences. While Clegg mortally fails (and so the novel is entitled accordingly), other male characters are meant to at least see through this abominable habit. Fowles also comes to see through it yet he does not completely overcome it for his female characters, as we will come to discover, do not go beyond the category of the *princesse lointaine*.

In *The Collector*, what is shown is the difference between ‘having’, represented by Clegg, which is masculine, and ‘being’, represented by Miranda, which is feminine. This contrast is taken to an extremity though since Fowles’s first novel is the most “brutal model of gender relations” (Cooper 21), yet Miranda is also contrasted to G.P.; Miranda recognizes that the way G.P. sees her is the way he sees other women: “‘une’ princesse lointaine” with the “‘une’ very heavily underlined” (*C* 188) signifying the generalizing, and categorizing, way he sees his muses (and Fowles’s). Yet she is the only ‘princesse’ that Fowles demystifies by allowing her to speak, by allowing the reader to get into her mind, and by allowing Clegg to ‘have’ her.

Women to Clegg are neatly classified the way he classifies his butterflies. They are either vulgar, like the prostitute he once meets at the start of his narrative, or asexual and chaste. They cannot be both. This Madonna/whore complex that is inherited in Clegg’s Victorian origins is unrepairable since he is unable to be educated out of it. When Miranda acts unpredictably and refuses to fill in one of the categories, he necessarily classifies her as the ‘whore’ in the equation. Clegg shifts from idealizing his ‘Madonna’ to possessing his

‘whore’: “it was below me, and below her, it was disgusting” (106). Idealizing and collecting are the only methods that he expresses towards Miranda and so her freedom is denied by both. The imagery of Lepidoptery that Clegg uses whenever he describes Miranda (“catching a rarity”, “Pale Clouded Yellow”, and “elusive and sporadic” (3)) is evidence for both idealizing her as he would ‘a rarity’ and control her as he would “a smaller” thing (24). What brings Clegg the pleasure he seeks is the control which usually makes him feel safe in his uncontrollable world of emotional chaos. When Miranda acts as a free individual, she is handled brutally until there is nothing to control. Her physical weakness prevails and Clegg decides to re-write the Madonna category all over again. Miranda’s weakness touches on Clegg’s respect again.

Thus, Miranda’s own reality is denied, for she is either idealized or degraded and in both ways enslaved. Cooper believes that while Clegg idolizes Miranda by using the lepidoptery linguistic description, he degrades her by using the art of photography (27). Photography is another way to possess Miranda by a masculine force; he takes the pictures in a violent way that allows him to exert his power over her. This is the result of Miranda’s unexpected behavior as a ‘whore’ and the punishment is another way to rightfully own her. Cooper links photography with ‘rape’, yet Clegg’s sexuality is solipsistic and Miranda’s pictures are used for pornographic purposes. The rape is symbolic: it is using his own way against hers. Accordingly, photography is a way to collect life into dead pictures and it, in a way, dehumanizes its subject and reduces it to an enslaving tool to the collector’s sexual fantasies.

Since collecting and possessing are highly condemned in Fowles’s philosophy, Clegg’s behavior is rightly criticized and we cannot judge Fowles’s representation of women by judging Clegg. The novel, thus, offers a critique to the masculine behavior taken to an extremity. Clegg is ridiculed and put into contrast with the smart and respected version of the

Fowlesian male model: G.P. whom we can rightfully use to criticize Fowles's portrayal of masculinity and how his perfect male models see women. The quest Miranda takes in the novel is not really her quest; it is Clegg's and G.P.'s. Loveday believes that Miranda is their anima: "the feminine aspect of both Clegg's and G.P.'s mind. She is embodied, not only as a girl, but specifically ... as a creative and artistic girl, because for Fowles *anima* and muse, physical sexuality and artistic creativity, are innately linked with each other and with femininity" (26). This means that the novel is not really about a female character finding her own authenticity. It shows that Miranda is used as a muse to bring the novel's two artists to terms with their own creative powers, their own anima. While the first artist prefers the dead version of Miranda and uses his art (photography) to represent his rejection of that feminine part in him, the second uses representational painting and finds individualism a reality outside himself, yet his compassion for that reality is nonexistent since his promiscuity denies it.

In either way, Miranda is seen as 'un objet d'art'. She brings her artists gratifications of creative power that is purely narcissistic (Cooper 30). Clegg describes the best pictures for Miranda as the "ones were with her face cut off. She didn't look much anyhow with the gag, of course. The best were when she stood in her high heels, from the back. The tied hands to the bed made what they call an interesting motif" (C 118). Miranda becomes an artistic creation that brings its artist the narcissistic pleasure of expressing himself (and only himself) through its object, Miranda. She is never free, even in her relation to G.P. who is a lesser extreme version of Clegg, for Clegg is after all a model that suits the gothic pattern in the story. Fowles designs his real male surrogate in G.P. and other mentors in later fiction. G.P. shares with Clegg the same, yet less pathological, erotic and aesthetic impulses. They both use Miranda aggressively as a commodity for their own artistic creations. The novel promotes the feminine as a source of creativity and so the female character is a material for the male artist's production yet while Clegg kills his 'objet d'art' and rejects his anima, G.P. celebrates it in his

‘alive’ (according to Miranda) work. The novel links photography to masculinity and painting to femininity since the latter is more creative. Although G.P. bullies his female muses, he allows them the freedom to be used by him. He even teaches Miranda to be the best version of herself. However, the relation of the creatively acceptable art (painting) and femininity is still problematic. Miranda speaks for G.P. against Clegg and so she is part of his conception of art (Cooper 39). Imaginative powers, which, according to Fowles, are supposed to belong to women, are inherent only in the two male artists, Clegg and G.P., and Miranda is nothing but a source for that power. Miranda is the passive voice of G.P. and is hardly thought of as an independent female character.

Miranda is thus victimized, for artistic purposes, by Clegg, G.P., and Fowles. Through her narrative, she opts for G.P. as a collector and accepts her role as a “Nielsen woman” (183) to empower through inspiring. Her role is thus problematic for a Fowlesian initiate. Usually Fowles’s initiates, like Nicholas, Charles, and Williams, are men who go through a quest of freedom. They are not objectified into artistic material (for even in *The Magus*, Nicholas plays the role of a character and reader in Conchis’s masques). Miranda’s relation to her mentor is sexual and aesthetic and so she is the last female initiate Fowles ever creates since she fails to gain her independence as an artist and is condemned to her function as a muse. This shows that artists in Fowles’s fiction, as we will come later to confirm through our analysis of his other works, are necessarily male and that femininity is but a generating power to the male’s artist work. Women are rather valued “as guardians of the flame of masculine genius and providers of the material for art. Thus the specific power of woman is for Fowles an indefinable and contradictory quality” (Cooper 12). It is a power as long as it is used by men.

While all Fowles’s female characters share Miranda’s passivity. Miranda is also exceptionally enslaved by two other symbolic forces inherent in Clegg and G.P.: convention and modernity. She is thus an embodiment of the female modern woman of the 50’s and 60’s

at the age of early feminist movement who is “crushed between the death of convention and the siren voice of unrestricted freedom” (Punter 72). Miranda’s role might be dictated by G.P. and Fowles, yet the control portrays a reality (an accidental success on the part of Fowles) that women suffered at that age. These new freedoms that have been offered to this new generation of women cannot be fully mastered by them since men have been in control for centuries. This explains the reason why *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* was a popular novel to the female audience at its time of publication. Sarah Woodruff was a model of the emancipated female heroine even if she is actually not.

The second initiate Fowles uses in his second novel is male. Nicholas is also an aspiring artist who dreams of becoming an accomplished and published poet. Although, as Miranda, he does not achieve that by the end of the novel, he goes through a quest of freedom to authenticate himself. This quest teaches him to be a superior individual and thus, since he does not die, there is the hope of becoming a mature artist. His narrative, which he does not write to himself only (we are included since we are aware of him writing it as part of the form of the novel), is a final product that is artistic. In contrast, Miranda writes to herself and some critics believe that she is writing to G.P.

Nicholas is also mentored by Conchis as Miranda is mentored by G.P.; however, his maleness saves him the sadomasochistic relation G.P. has with Miranda. He is written (by Conchis in his masques) and writing (his own text), read and reading in the novel. He shares with G.P. the masculine trait of collecting women and that is the main target of repair to Conchis. The latter tries to teach Nicholas to treat women as independent subjects rather than sexual objects. This means that Fowles’s portrayal of women is not to be judged through Nicholas until Nicholas is taught correctly. We are thus to judge Conchis and Nicholas’s more mature self. Before we go along with that, we should first analyze Nicholas’s former character to see the difference between the obstructed and the promoted models of masculinity.

In the former section, we have analyzed the way Nicholas views both Alison and Julie and his reasons for idealizing Julie. Like Clegg, he sees in Julie a perfect model rather than an independent human. He fictionalizes her into different roles like Circe, Crete, and Adriane. She is also, unlike Alison, a woman of his education, class, and Englishness, yet that is all Nicholas knows. He also likes that she is beautiful and mysterious. A woman's beauty and mystery are not features celebrated by the inauthentic Nicholas only. They are celebrated by all the Fowlesian male characters since no female character is articulate in the way his male characters are. Miranda, the only female narrator, speaks for G.P. to criticize Clegg, yet she never alludes to G.P.'s ideas with a critical mind, which shows that her articulation is a man's articulation. Thus, even the inauthentic Nicholas is another version of approved masculinity in Fowles's fiction. He describes his love for Alison as "a passionate wave of desire" and he denies that it is lust (*M* 269); seeing her naked body enables him to see "through the ugly, the unpoetic accretions of modern life to the naked real self of her – a vision of her as naked in that way as she was in body; Eve glimpsed again through ten thousand generations" (269). Nicholas here is mythologizing Alison into her generic origin, Eve, something Conchis advises him against. Conchis teaches him to appreciate the 'wave' instead of the 'water' and embrace the matter's individuality instead of its general form. Nicholas mistakes, against his conception, lust for love when it comes to both women. One is already a myth: "extinct Lawrentian woman" (242) and one is its mother, 'Eve'.

Nicholas's way of collecting and classifying women into myths is a reflection of his masculinity. His main dilemma is that he lacks the feeling self. From the very start of the novel, he finds in his parents' death and Alison's breakup an enriching freedom. Once he learns how to feel and to be compassionate enough, he is to embrace his anima and attain an authentic self. His anima is Alison rather than Julie and her twin who are "nothing but a personification of [his] own selfishness" (601). Fowles's understanding of the feminine is

dictated on his surrogate, Conchis. Conchis guides Nicholas through the novel to make the right choice, which is Alison. He preaches about the importance of balance (the way Fowles does in *The Aristos*) that is brought to life by women through love. He tells Nicholas that a man's world is "a world governed by brute force, humourless arrogance, illusory prestige and primeval stupidity" (413). After Nicholas's masque, Mrs de Seitas, Julie and June's mother and Conchis's mistress, also instructs Nicholas into choosing Alison, for she finds in her "a very rare capacity for attachment and devotion" (601). Thus, Nicholas is forced (by Fowles and his surrogate) to choose Alison as part of his journey towards existential freedom. The irony does not lie in the word 'forced' only. It is rather embodied in Conchis and Fowles's contradictory endeavor to teach (by making him see the mundane Alison as the rightful unclassifiable female model) Nicholas about the immorality of possessing and classifying women and to romanticize and idealize women into a godlike inarticulate "definitions of the mother" (296). Angela Carter, a writer and novelist, writes, in her *The Sadeian Woman: And the Ideology of Pornography*, that "all the mythic versions of women, from the myth of the redeeming purity of the virgin to that of the healing, reconciling mother, are consolatory nonsenses; and consolatory nonsense seems to be a fair definition of myth, anyway" (5). The reason for such a 'consolatory nonsense' is inherent in a masculine principle of "denial of the complexity of human relations" which rather promotes a sense of superiority over a healthy human interaction (6). Although Fowles seems to be working against mythologizing his female characters, the result takes its opposite course.

At first, Nicholas does not see Alison the way Conchis seems to perceive her. Yet he starts to appreciate her reality after he gets intoxicated with the Julie image before the trial. Alison is initially seen as vulgar, too sexually available, and embarrassing. What Nicholas shares with Clegg is an inability to see women beyond the Madonna/whore categories. Alison is someone whom "men were always aware of", and Nicholas has had an awareness of their

eyes “sliding ... at her as she passed” (31-32). Her sexual availability emasculates him. Julie, on the other hand, is someone who makes Nicholas feel free to appropriate her and place her in any exclusive fictional role he fantasizes. Her sexual innocence is the conventional feminine role that he finds arousing. Actually, when Alison interrupts Nicholas’s involvement in the masque and visits him, he describes his renewed love to her as “an intensely literary moment” and “a poem” to “a child of sixteen, not a girl of twenty-four” (268-9). Alison is assimilated into a Julie version and is loved only under the conditions of being sexually innocent (a Madonna) and fictionalized into a mythical role where Nicholas can rightfully claim his masculine superiority. Alison here is written by Nicholas and, like Miranda, is turning into an object of art (Cooper 85-6). Alison is finally sexually idealized by the narcissistic Nicholas and is able to fill a role imposed by him.

What we find rather contradictory in Conchis’s masque and Nicholas’s understanding of it is that he learns from Conchis the opposite of what is intended for him to learn: assimilating women into art. Conchis assimilates Julie and her sister into his masque and Nicholas does the same in Parnassus. However, Conchis plots against this method when he disintoxicates Nicholas by making him watch an obscene love making scene between Julie and Joe. According to the reader, Nicholas is supposed to learn that idealizing a woman is wrong and that he needs to appreciate Alison for what she is: her real self. Still, we do not know whether Nicholas is looking for Alison because he has learned this principle of seeing people as they are or because he is not writing Julie anymore and he is still capable of writing Alison (which he recently understands that he maybe can).

Julie is never free from the text of Conchis or Nicholas. To Nicholas, she is, as we have seen, a personification of his selfishness and a symbol of the perfect modern Madonna. As the Parnassus’s Alison, she is a “living artefact” (88). To Conchis, she is the same embodiment and she is never seen outside his text. Nicholas, on the other hand, is free to write

his own text and comment on the masque, for he is the character, the reader, and the writer. Cooper concedes that since an idealizer (Nicholas) and an artist (Conchis) see women as objects of art, then “idealization and creativity [are] not only essentially masculine but in many ways interdependent” (88). Thus, women in the novel are presented as artifacts, which mean they are materially available for men who are the creative artists. Julie is part of Conchis and Nicholas’s texts and Alison is part of Nicholas’s and Fowles’s. Alison never ceases to be objectified even after Nicholas’s initiation and readiness for existential authenticity. Mrs de Seitas, who is supposed to be the female equivalent of Conchis, tells the angry Nicholas that Alison is not “a *present*” and that “she must be paid for” (*M* 631). She also connects her with a china plate that she offers Nicholas to test his ability to manage “fragile objects” (624). While Alison is objectified, Jojo is described as animal-like: “humped-up shape”, “puppy-slumped”, and “frog-like grin” (634). Nicholas takes on a friendship, which is safe on his side since he sees that she resembles a “fat boy” (634), that is inconsiderate to Jojo’s feelings to test himself of whether he is able to be compassionate or not. Jojo ends up hurt since his friendship with women is based on avoiding his usual standard of attractive sexual femininity and so it is a reaction to an inherently strong masculine principle that still exists in him.

While Alison is forced on Nicholas (by Fowles), Sarah Woodruff, in Fowles’s third novel, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, is smoothly promoted as the perfect female model. She is Fowles’s most admired heroine amongst his female readers, yet even she does not embody the fully emancipated model from the Fowlesian *princesse lointaine*. As a result of its popularity, many questions have been raised about whether the novel is a feminist statement or not. There is actually a group of critics who believe it is. Deborah Byrd is one. She argues, in her “The Evolution and Emancipation of Sarah Woodruff: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* as a Feminist Novel”, that Sarah achieves her independence from the Victorian background when she chooses her artistic milieu of the Pre-Raphaelites; her freedom might be misunderstood by

other women of her age, for she refuses Charles's proposal to engage in a world free from convention to embrace her New Woman persona (Byrd 307). Eileen Warburton believes that Byrd's stand is but one among the three ways in which Sarah as a feminist is viewed (Warburton 105). The two other ways argue against the latter's stand. However, what makes Sarah different from Fowles's former female characters is that "Fowles intended to present women's dilemmas with sympathy" (104).

The second argument against Byrd's position is, Warburton maintains, Magali Cormier's. The latter sees Sarah as a mysterious generator of the artist's genius. Sarah, according to this category of critics, is denied a personal point of perspective since she is not allowed to speak her mind. The narrator claims that he does not know how his characters' minds work, yet it is but Sarah's mind that he refuses to enter. As a result, Sarah remains impenetrable as part of her female charm; "she remains an object rather than a full character" (Warburton 105). The third argument also refutes the idea of the independence of Sarah as a character. Bruce Woodcock believes that Fowles mythologizes, through Charles, Sarah by demoting her into an Eve, a redeemer, a siren, and many god-like figures. This mythologizing pattern is present in most of Fowles's fiction and is part of degrading a woman by romantically and sexually idealizing her into a mother image of "Oedipal quest" (Woodstock 113).

What makes Sarah different, beside the sympathy that Warburton sees in its portrayal, is the reification of Fowles's idea of creating a female magus. This obliges us to provide a comparison between Sarah and Fowles's most celebrated male magus, Conchis. Fowles writes in his Forward to *The Magus* that "I long toyed with notion of making Conchis a woman" (6-7). The notion is made possible in Sarah and that is maybe the reason for her rather remarkable creative capacities. Sarah is Fowles's first test in combining creativity and femininity in a female, rather than a male, artist. According to Pamela Cooper, whom we

would add to a fourth category of critics who do not believe that Sarah is a feminist, Fowles fails in this embodiment. Cooper does not see Sarah as an object of male mythologizing only; she sees in her a passive artifact that is used by her own initiate, the Pre-Raphaelites, and Fowles. We will come back to Cooper's perspective when we deal with that of Warburton who thinks of Fowles as an 'accidental feminist'.

Eileen Warburton uses Fowles's biographical information, his drafts of the novel, and many other notes that Fowles relied on to write his novel and presents us with the real reasons behind the controversy of the portrayal of Sarah. Fowles claims that the idea first came to him one morning when he was half-awake/half-dreaming of a mysterious woman who "stands at the end of a deserted quay and stares out to sea" (*W* 13), yet Warburton believes that Sarah is inspired by Fowles's life with Elizabeth, his first wife and editor. Elizabeth was married to Fowles's colleague when he used to teach in Greece in a private school; the teacher's name was Roy Christy. Fowles fell in love with Elizabeth who is not his social equal (the relationship is described as "emotionally wrenching" and "complicated" (Warburton 110)) and cost himself, and his colleague, their jobs. The relationship they had is not just "intellectually radical", but also inspiring, for Fowles's forbidden experience with "the working-class, forbidden woman awakened and changed [him]" (110). He started a first draft of an unpublished novel, 'An Island and Greece', that was inspired by his relationship to Elizabeth in that period. Choosing Elizabeth at the time when she finally got her divorce was a test to Fowles, for he does come from a rather opposite social background.

Charles and Nicholas are two characters in Fowles's novels who also choose the sinned woman over their social equal. Sarah Woodruff is not just a woman who is not Charles's equal (socially, because she is supposed to be his superior intellectually); she is, like Elizabeth and like Maria Keratos (the character inspired by Elizabeth in Fowles's first unpublished novel and who is referred to as 'the Austian's officer's whore'), "the mysterious woman-with-a-

past” (111). So *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* could be a re-writing of that melodramatic ‘woman-with-a-past’ heroine rather than the mystifying woman on a quay whom Fowles “didn’t know her crime. But [he] wished to protect her. That is, [he] began to fall in love with her” (W 14). Falling in love is linked to the masculine act of ‘protecting’, so Fowles creates a crime that takes him back to the time he first met his wife; that crime is “the French lieutenant’s whore” (FLW 153). The protection part lies in saving that woman by creating a male figure who would marry her in spite of her sin. This would not have created the Sarah we know, the one who chooses her freedom over Charles’s proposal to marry her. However, this is exactly how Fowles’s first draft of the novel ends. The reason lies in Fowles’s masculine beliefs of love as protection and of feminine roles as domestic care and nurture to their male partners (Warburton 113-4).

What makes Fowles an accidental feminist then is the revisions that his wife made for him when she first read the first draft of the novel. Elizabeth was angry at how Fowles was proud of this female creation; she thought of Sarah as another shallow version of Lilly/Julie. Elizabeth’s comments about the ending pushed Fowles to change it into two: one that pleased him and pleased his principle male character, Charles, and one that freed Sarah and Charles from the writer. Warburton calls this intervention a happy accident that would be rather welcomed by Fowles “as a guide to help him to later examine his mythologies” (116). Warburton confesses at the end that Sarah, even after Fowles’s revisions, still raises different controversies about her position as a ‘New woman’.

Adding our perspective to this position, we believe that the ending with Sarah’s freedom is still romanticized. Plus, she does not really end as free since she ceases to be an artist and becomes a model to Gabriel Rossetti. Following the novel’s plot, Sarah is manipulative as part of her role as a magus/mentor to Charles. The ending would have served her well if she turns into an artist rather than a model, yet it further emphasizes that her

manipulations for Charles are pointlessly vague and serve no artistic ends; this further prioritizes her immorality over her aestheticism while Conchis's manipulations maintain an opposite position for morality is rather sacrificed for a great aesthetic purpose. Sarah is thus perceived as both immoral and an unsuccessful artist whose manipulations serve her to be a muse in a potent male artist's world.

While Sarah refuses to be demoted to a level of a lover the way Diana and Isobel do in *The Ebony Tower* (in the case of Diana, she wants to be Williams's lover but Williams is the one who chooses to reject her offer), she does become a muse. From the very start of the novel, the narrator presents her as an objet d'art. He refuses to enter Sarah's mind because according to him, and to Fowles, women have superior intuitive and emotional power that men are unable to construe. Thus, Sarah, who has "depths he himself cannot plumb" (Loveday 60), is present as a generating inarticulate power. Her inarticularity is contrasted with Charles and Dr Grogan's intellectualism and thus it is interpreted by them and not her. She tells Charles on a number of occasions that "I am not to be understood even by myself" (*FLW* 386). Sarah is supposed to be "some kind of a sub-intellectual Earth Mother figure" (Loveday 61) which add to her an element of generalizing femininity so popular in Fowles's novels. Her mind is put into contrast with her triumphant heart which denies her an equality of intellect with the male leaders of the novel, Charles and Dr Grogan. The brotherhood of Charles and Dr Grogan is put against the sisterhood of Sarah and Millie. The first is purely intellectual and the second is inarticulate and sexual although the narrator denies he knows anything of the relation and that he can only hint at it as a progressive act of sexuality that is preceding its modern time. Thus, he links men to intellectualism and women to sexuality, inarticularity, and progressiveness. This is supposed to put women on a higher scale than that of men, for the narrator thinks highly of the latter values than the former; women are "much closer to real values" than men (*FLW* 30). Yet the unclassified Sarah seems like an ideological conception,

rather than a real representation, of a superior female species. We are made to believe, in spite of the fact that Fowles's persuasions lead us against this conception, that the narrator, and thus Fowles, is afraid to enter her consciousness because he denies, or is ignorant, that men and women are simply alike. In other words, he is making her superior in order not to fall in the trap of making her inferior. Romanticizing and mythologizing are methods which Clegg and Nicholas are condemned for, yet here they are practiced by their author.

Cooper's analysis of Sarah would be an addition to ours since she also focuses on Sarah as a demoted *objet d'art* rather than an artist, pretty much the way she does with the other female protagonists of Fowles's fiction. Her treatment of Sarah is different in that she analyzes how Fowles valorizes her creative powers at first through allowing her to be the novel's magus and then demotes her using the novel's metafictionally narratorial device. Sarah is the first feminized artist, yet her capacities are limited since the narrator announces the fictionality of the story in relation to Sarah; he does not answer the questions regarding her identity as of "who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come" (96), then he declares in chapter 17 right after these questions that he does "not know" and that the 'story' he is "telling is all imagination" (97). Cooper believes that the metafictional device is used right after raising questions about the identity of Sarah which limits her power as an artist and emphasizes her as an imagery character whose will is dependent on the imagination of its author even if he thinks that his characters should have a freedom of their own. By using the metafictional technique and drawing the reader's attention to the fictionality of the text and Sarah as part of it, the narrator reveals her as "not only written by the narrator in a way similar to that in which Conchis is written by Nick-as-narrator; she is written with the kind of narratorial and narrational awareness that makes her part of a text in the process of revealing its own artificial and illusory nature. The reader is therefore inevitably directed to perceive Sarah in terms of artificiality and illusion" (Cooper 114). So Sarah's mystery, unlike that of

Conchis, lies in her passivity as a real writer outside the narrator's fictional world. As a result, the fictionalizer becomes fictionalized and loses her authority over the reader, Charles, and the narrator.

Sarah's fictionality is not the only problem that hinders her growth as an artist. She is an inarticulate artist whose power lies, supposedly, in words. When she tells Charles her fabricated story about being a 'lieutenant's whore', she suffers in conveying her ideas to him as she is "at a loss for words" (*FLW* 427) and it is always up to Charles "to coax the mystery out of her" (164). As we have seen earlier, this inarticularity is part of Fowles's project of making his female character superior, yet it is also part of preserving Sarah as a *princesse lointaine* instead of making her a successful articulate artist. Her erotic aloofness and beauty are an available creative power for the male artist, Daniel Rossetti, and they are the most sought for elements in a muse.

Diana, in "The Ebony Tower", is also demoted into a reincorporated muse in the work of a great painter, Henry Breasley. Her creative power is also broken and integrated to allow a greater creative genius which belongs to the male artist as Breasley calls her 'mouse' which is another verbal variation on 'muse'. Even Williams, who is supposed to understand her freedom, is inspired by the possibility of her materiality, for he contemplates the possibility of choosing to be with her, instead of his wife, for selfish causes that would authenticate him as an artist, so missing to be with her is missing an "existential chance" (*ET* 109), for it is "something far beyond the girl; an anguish, a being bereft of a freedom whose true nature he had only just seen" (102). Breasley uses Diane in his paintings and to interpret his inarticularity with words. Again, this is a reminder of Sarah who struggles to express herself, yet it is only a reminder; Breasley communicates eloquently with paint, which is, according to Fowles, even more expressive.

Nevertheless, we cannot deny that Diana has some power over both artists. She manages to manipulate both men into doing what she wishes them to do and we cannot help but construe that her stay at Breasley's house is a personal choice, for he is in constant fear that she would leave him. She is also the one who chooses for Williams; his faithfulness to his wife is questionable. The story ends with his regret for not taking his chance with her. Simon Loveday believes that "the decisive character is not David but Diana" (Loveday 92). She is the one who opens up to Williams about her former life and her life with Breasley; she intelligently hints at her need for a rescue by a "prince" when "she said nothing – or everything" (ET 98) and finally deduces that "it's all a lie" (99). Williams plays a role she wants him to play and at the end she is the one who makes his decision for him detecting passivity in his mind.

Even though the last argument seems to put Fowles's conception of Diana on a more sympathetic stand, it does not fulfill its feminist position. Diana is not a decider as much as Williams is a failure. Thus, his failure is the one the writer puts focus on by romanticizing his choice of going back to his wife as a less authentic one. Diana's voice is absent from the last pages of Williams's own epiphany and the narrative uses Diana as an instrument for a lost chance at being a better aesthete: "his failure that previous night was merely the symbol, not the crux of the matter" (109). Diana possesses a symbolic role that would have made Williams a better artist like Breasley. Williams envies Breasley and his free life, so his choice of Diana is not a choice that stems from viewing her as his equal. It is the choice that debases her as a strong artistic element.

What is interesting is while Sarah complacently chooses her role as a model, Diana is trapped by the same role at Breasley's. Diana's story might be a continuation of Sarah's, and Williams is the latter's lost chance of choosing Charles. In any case, Fowles is using Diana, as he uses Sarah, as an *objet d'art*. They both need the male artist, or reader, to interpret and

empower them. Their sexuality is highly valorized and their bodies are used as material for the male artists. Diana's art is thought of as inferior to Breasley and Williams's, but she is almost worshipped as a material for art, making both artists idealizers like Nicholas in *The Magus*. Since Fowles is speaking for Breasley, as he is for Conchis, he can be fairly accused for idealizing his female protagonists as much as his inauthentic male artists are.

Another female artist in Fowles's collection of short stories is Isobel from "Enigma". Isobel is Fowles best attempt at freeing his female characters. Until the last scene, she is represented as an element of power in his short story. She is the one who helps detective Jennings to close the case of Marcus Fielding on the premises of an existential theory about the latter choosing to commit suicide because he is tired of the meaningless life he is leading. Isobel, like Sarah, plays the role of a great fictionalizer here and her theory is taken seriously by Jennings until his superiors tell him to "digging up some hard evidence instead of wasting his time on half-baked psychology" (239). Men are emphasized as rational, analytical beings focused on 'having' and 'possessing' while women are linked to creativity and originality which is referred to here as 'half-baked psychology'.

Even if Isobel seems to be having a promising feminist originality, she is rather presented "in terms of her sexuality and not in terms of the artistic power which she seems to possess" (Cooper 177-8). Fowles emphasizes her fictionality the way he does with Sarah when she says that "nothing is real. All is fiction" (*ET* 236), and her power as a writer is diminished by that of Fowles's. Another reason that denies Isobel her power is that her sexuality is valorized over her creativity. She is used in the narrative as a seductive element by both the writer and Jennings. The male gaze triumphs and she is to be casted as the mistress to Jennings at the end. Like Sarah, she is the muse rather than the artist.

Women in Fowles's work represent the right material for his art: mystery and sexuality. Like his male artists, Fowles idealizes his female characters and condemns his male

ones, for as the masculine possesses and 'have', the feminine 'be', and their role is to serve their male artists by teaching them through their mysterious inarticularity and alarming sexuality. They are a source of power but they never embody that power as their male counterparts. While men are expressive, their ability to represent and express comes from the sexual eloquence equaled by the linguistic powerlessness present in women. The idealization is thus celebrated rather than condemned and male creativity stems from it. All the mentors see women as the mythical mother, Eve, and none sees them as different individuals. As a result, the *princesse lointaine* is the only available female model that Fowles promotes, denying women their variant verisimilitudes. Fowles's theory of the superiority of the feminine over the masculine serves the male artist rather than the female artist. The female cannot ascend her role as a muse and her creative powers are impotent as long as they are not conquered by a male artist. Fowles's beliefs about women are at odds with his representation.

#### Conclusion

Fowles's the Many is a group of existentially inauthentic characters who are not, as Heidegger believes, in a constant process of becoming. Clegg is someone who resides in Sartre's 'in-itself', the unaware and inactive self that does not change its state of being because it is unable to, yet even the potential Few, like Miranda, Nicholas, and Williams, are inauthentic.<sup>13</sup> However, their intelligence and their psychological balance allows them an opportunity to see through their inauthenticity. Clegg is denied, by his own pathological nature, to be a potential Few. Accordingly, existential inauthenticity encompasses Fowles's the Many, who are the psychopaths and the conformists, like Ernestina and the burglar, and the Potential Few, who are in a quest to become better individuals yet they are thwarted by their selfishness and emotional immaturity. The potential Few are not like Sartre's inauthentic individuals though, with the exception of Charles; they are mostly not conformist since most of Fowles's main characters are artists. The freedom they are to gain is freedom from their

own narrow conception of the world around them that is mainly caused by their condescendence.

Emotional maturity is a feminine feature; actually, what makes a man authentic is what connects him to his anima. While Fowles believes that women are superior to men in that they generate a creative influence in them, he does not see them beyond the label of the muse, or what most critics call the 'princesse lointaine'. His female characters are unapproachable and are only gazed upon for inspirational purposes. They are inarticulate and easily assimilated into art. Fowles, like his male artists, 'collects', although he abhors the concept, his female characters into a type that accentuates the masculine rather than the feminine. Women, in his fiction, are never successful artists and they never gain a reality outside the general and confined representation imposed by their creator. Fowles, by his definition, sacrifices an important feature of authenticity as an artist, which is embracing his own anima.

## Notes

1. The word 'hoi polloi' means the Many which Fowles derives from the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.
2. The accusation is not altogether invalid. We will be dealing with this idea of fascism in relation to democratic socialism and didacticism in the third section of chapter three.
3. Further understanding of the allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* will be dealt with in the next section and the last chapter of the research.
4. The problem Clegg suffers from is the 'Madonna/whore' complex which stems from the Victorian conventions about sexuality. He either idealizes a woman for her prudishness or condemns her for her sexual openness, so a woman is either a Madonna or a whore and she cannot be anything else in between.
5. Clegg's narrative style has to go through a deep discussion, yet in here we are just relating the elements that are important to his personality. A supplementary discussion will be dealt with in the fourth chapter that discusses the form of the fiction we have chosen exclusively.
6. De Deukans is part of Nicholas's journey of maturity from the Many to the Few, for he is used as a metafictional device by Conchis to teach Nicholas about his own egoism.
7. Sam is best discussed in relation to the theory of evolution in the next chapter, for although he is a member of the Many, he is, in evolutionary terms, superior to Charles. Ernestina is also on Sam's side of social evolution, yet she is a female and women suffer their inferior role for a greater period of time than that of class.
8. The word 'aristoi' means the Few which Fowles derives from the pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus.

9. Charles, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, is the most successful incarnation of a member of the Few (since his only flaw is laziness) and so he is better to be dealt with in chapter 3.

10. We cannot confirm this assumption yet until we deal with the protagonists' quests and their success in the next chapter. However, our reading of the novels and short stories of Fowles has given rise to this first impression.

11. We will be dealing with didacticism in Fowles's fiction in the next chapter.

12. This concept describes Fowles's female characters as unreachable mysteries that generate a sexual attraction which cannot be satisfied since the power of the mysterious supersedes the power of the concrete reality to the artist.

13. Heidegger's concept of becoming and Sartre's 'in-itself' are elaborately referred to in the first chapter.

## **Chapter Three:**

Freedom towards the Few: Fowlesian Ideas of Power

## Introduction

Embracing existential anguish is the first step to realize one's unlimited freedom. However, before this realization, Fowles believes that a member of the potential Few is to be brought into awareness by other means. Miranda, in *The Collector*, is chosen by Clegg as a hostage. Ironically, it is this hazardous incident that leads her to an awareness of her own freedom. This chapter analyzes, first, Fowlesian means of freedom, then evaluates its product that Fowles calls the Few. The first section elaborates on these means to achieve existential freedom. Hazard is one systematic element of the universe that contributes to the promotion of freedom; this element is accidental which makes it contradictory to freedom. The question to be asked in here is: how are our lives to be restricted by hazard and yet the latter would also be the means towards our freedom? This question, along with evolution's implausibility as another means to freedom (since evolution has always been thought of as an ideological rival to existential freedom), is to be answered in the first section. The first section also analyzes the Fowlesian conception of the domaine, which is the third means to freedom.

The second section focuses on the potential Few achieving existential authenticity and becoming an aristos, a legitimate member of the Few. This chapter answers one of the main objectives of the research which is the practical meaning of Sartre's existential authenticity and whether it is achievable or not. If it is not achievable, would that be a failure of Fowles's characters or his? This question is to be further explored in the third section where we are to criticize Fowles's conception of the Few and the Many as, first, an elitist discourse and as, second, having a didactic effect on his novels. This means that we are to judge Fowles's most powerful ideas and their coherence with the narrative. Character freedom is in direct relation to the question of didacticism here; thus, what makes Fowles's characters the most aesthetically appealing, members of the Many or the Few?

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### 3.1. Elaborating on Fowlesian Means to Existential Freedom: Hazard, Cultural Evolution, and the 'Domaine'

The Fowlesian concepts that promote existential freedom in Fowles's fiction, and that also differ radically from Sartre's original conception of this freedom, are contradictory. Outwardly, they seem to be repressing rather than freeing the individual on a quest for existential authenticity. However, on a close reading, they offer a rereading to those of Sartre. Hazard is one of these concepts which are highly celebrated in Fowles's fiction. The word is mentioned numerous times in his fiction by characters and narrators alike.

In the first chapter, we have referred to a Sartrean concept called 'brute existent' which hinders the for-itself from attaining its fixed aim that is defined by freedom from all conventions. Although brute existent is a constraint to one's freedom, it is nevertheless part of the project and it is given meaning because of the project of the for-itself. Fowles believes that this restraint, or what he calls hazard, is not part of a fixed project as much as it is a guide towards an unfixed project that is more liberating for its mystery. In his "Notes on an Unfinished Novel", he defines the image of the Victorian woman that inspired his third published novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, which interrupted him while writing another work, as an "accident of inspiration [that] has to be allowed for in writing, both in the work one is on (in unplanned development of character, unintended incidents, and so on) and in one's work as a whole. Follow the accident, fear the fixed plan – that is the rule" (W 14). So accidents should rather promote freedom since they are uncontrollable the way unconventionality is. The opposite of chance, or hazard, is having a safe god controlling one's life; this idea is further analyzed in John Fowles's *The Aristos*. He states that "a god who revealed his will, who 'heard' us, who answered our prayers, who was propitiable, the kind of god simple people like to imagine would be desirable: such a god would destroy all our hazard, all our purpose and all our happiness" (18). We are rather, and should believe that we

are, conditioned by chance which generates a greater possibility of freedom. However, chance is also limiting in some unfortunate cases, yet this is how the natural human world works and some things, according to Fowles, should be sacrificed for the greater good of humanity rather than the individual. Hazard does bring certain equality amongst generations rather than amongst individuals of the same generation. This point will be further analyzed when we deal with hazard in relation to cultural evolution later this section.

Hazard then is imperative for existential freedom, for it means that “no one will save us but ourselves” (26). Hazard, then, “grants purpose to human life” since God’s existence is a liberating factor even if it “determines our situation and possibilities with respect to others” (Onega 24). Miranda’s life has been given purpose with the sudden interference of Clegg’s obsessive plan. She does not achieve her ultimate authentic self because of hazard too; her illness and death are other interferences that interrupt her futuristic plans. Even Clegg’s plan is a product of hazard although ‘plan’ and hazard are contradictory terms. What makes it an accident is that Miranda is the one who has been chosen and not any other girl. Both characters’ degree of openness is related to their understanding of hazard. Miranda struggles at first and asks God’s intervention several times, yet she later submits to the working of chance and let go of her former conventional beliefs. She starts her diary with the intention of praying to God for guidance (*C* 158) and ends up “Godless. These last few days I’ve felt Godless. I’ve felt cleaner, less muddled, less blind. I still believe in a God. But he’s so remote, so cold, so mathematical. I see that we have to live as if there is no God. Prayer and worship and singing hymns — all silly and useless” (239). Miranda dies Godless but with an enlightening knowledge of her possible absolute freedom that has been hindered and promoted by the chance of her imprisonment. What we can have against Miranda’s knowledge is its futuristic dimension. We will come back to this point shortly after discussing Clegg’s conception of hazard.

Clegg, as we have seen in the former chapter, has a psychopathic character which disables him from seeing beyond his own voyeuristic view of the world. His eyes act like a camera; they capture still reality and deny the existence of motion. Miranda's tragic end is generated by this opposition in character, for she is the symbol of life itself, which is incarnated in Clegg. Since Clegg does not believe in the freedom of the other in regards to his obsessive plan, he always, in his narrative, expresses surprise at how Miranda acts when she does against his plans. Unlike Miranda, his belief in God is absent from the start, for he is the master of his own plans. Thus, his conception of hazard is also inexistent. The world he is controlling is his world only. A place for hazard is a place for another authority challenge. Hazard jeopardizes his power. When hazard interferes with Clegg's divine plans at the end (with the death of Miranda), Clegg replaces Miranda with another girl and so his obsessive powers resist the challenge of the interference. Clegg might be a metaphorical God that is working against hazard and is failing without his knowledge of it. His comic attempts are doomed and the reader knows that Miranda's death is a kind of triumph in itself.

Although Miranda acknowledges the arbitrary interferences of hazard in her life, the knowledge she attains is purely theoretical and futuristic. She lives in the future and has no recognition of the present. Her ideas are fantastic embodiments of a life that does not fit in her current situation. She makes assumptions and theories that contradict her behavior. Her belief in pacifism is one. Although she claims to be a pacifist, she does use violence against Clegg when she hits him with an axe. Her conception of marriage is based on a snobbish feminist ideology that thinks of a wife as "a Great Female Cabbage" for she is frightened of "getting sucked down into the house and the house things and the baby-world and the child-world and the cooking-world and the shopping-world" (150). Her idea of a husband is as narrow as her idea of a wife. She sees herself only with her match in beauty and class.

Clegg's narrow-mindedness comes as no surprise, but its accentuation comes as a result of Miranda's opposite nature. While the latter's life is projected towards a non-existent future, Clegg's lifestyle is deadly conventional and old. Miranda fires words like "suburban", "stale", "dead", and "square" to describe his methods and style (56). Clegg is a man of the conventional past whose morality is against that of the present. This is shown in his reluctance to join his colleagues after work in their normal social gatherings. When he wins the pools, he does not decide to invest in his social life by declaring that "if you are on the grab and immoral like most nowadays, I suppose you can have a good time with a lot of money when it comes to you" (7). Tarbox believes that both Clegg and Miranda "are guilty of putting time into categories. Clegg is mired in the past, unable to cope with change, progress, movement. Miranda is maniacal about the present and tries to dissociate herself from the older generation, as if the world began with her. She has no mooring in the past" ("A Critical Study of the Novels of John Fowles" 72). Tarbox quotes Carle Jung to support her argument about the failure of both characters:

Whoever protects himself from what is new and strange and thereby regresses to the past, falls into the same neurotic condition as the man who identifies himself with the new and runs away from the past. The only difference is that one has estranged himself from the past, and the other from the future. In principle both are doing the same thing; they are salvaging a narrow state of consciousness (Jung 104).

Tarbox relates both characters' inability to cope with the present with their nature as obsessive collectors. However, this particular character can be seen in relation to their inability to submit to the power of hazard. Miranda challenges the power of chance by imposing, obsessively, a future-like fantasy like Clegg does by denying his present and his future. Hazard is a tool of the present. It is neither the idealized past nor the perfect utopian future, for the human being

exists in the present “infinite situation of finite hazard” (A 17). It is the now that determines the future and denying the importance of the present is denying the power of hazard. Nicholas, in *The Magus*, fails in the same way Clegg and Miranda do. He idealizes a future with Julie where every sexual fantasy is fulfilled, yet the future he idealizes is part of an imitated perfect and lost past that he admires. Julie is a modern version of Conchis’s desired Lily.

Nicholas lives everywhere, except the present. He is unable to accept the accidents that happen in his life. Alison is an accident that comes across Nicholas’s life, yet her non-Englishness and her open sexuality is against his conception of an ideal woman. His ideal woman is Conchis’s fictional character who plays the role of his dead lover, Lily. Since Lily is too fantastic and Nicholas is too aware of her acting role, Conchis changes her into the modern, more approachable, model, Julie. Nicholas falls deeply in love with the last version and is totally blind that her role is still categorized to suit his fantastic ideal of a past Victorian-like woman. Conchis, through Lily, is trying to teach Nicholas out of his own misconception of human relations by telling Nicholas that Lily is unable to see that she is acting a role of the past, that her world, with her old fashioned dress and accent, “is not the real world. These are not real relationships” (M 282). Lily is then pursued as a schizophrenic person who is unable to live in the now, something that Nicholas, minding the schizophrenia, suffers.

One of the reasons for the promotion of Alison as the best choice is her affinity with the present. While the novel is narrated with the use of the past, since the events Nicholas experiences reside in the past, the last paragraph that describes Alison’s answer to Nicholas’s somehow perverted proposal, for he does use violence by slapping her in the face, of getting her back is written in the present tense in a form that is fragmented: “She is silent, she will never speak, never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave this frozen tense” (656). This present ‘frozen’ tense is symbolic of Alison’s reality and collision with hazard. Unlike

Miranda and Nicholas, she lives in the now; however, it is Nicholas who is writing this part, so it might be understood, since Alison lives within his text, that it is Nicholas who finally understands the assignment. These fragments are after all “fragments of freedom, of hazard” (656).

One of Conchis’s main lessons is about hazard. Conchis asks Nicholas at the start of his visits to Bourani if he feels that he is elect (chosen) the way Leverrier, a former initiate at Bourani, feels. Nicholas denies that he has any faith in God. Conchis, then, makes sure that Nicholas is nevertheless chosen; while Nicholas feels complimented, Conchis declares that hazard makes one elect for “the elect [is] the chosen by hazard” (109). Being at Bourani is a stroke of chance and so everything that happens there, although elaborately planned and organized, is also a work of hazard. Nicholas’s understanding of the masque is his only freedom against the ‘godgame’ which is an imitation of a divine interference. Conchis plays the role of god, of a magus, trying his best to control Nicholas’s life, yet Nicholas should not fall for the plan because Conchis is careful enough to teach Nicholas of his own humaneness: “you must not think I know every answer, for I do not” (185). He hints at Nicholas having powers, as a reader and character in his godgame, by saying that “I know now it was our believing that we were fulfilling some end, serving some plan—that all would come out well in the end, because there was some great plan over all. Instead of the reality. There is no plan. All is hazard. And the only thing that will preserve us is ourselves” (129). The last statement is reminiscent of Fowles’s statement of hazard as an authentic alternative to God in *The Aristos*. Conchis speaks for Fowles as G.P. does in *The Collector*. It comes as no surprise then that the characters that use the concept ‘hazard’ the most in Fowles’s fiction are mentors rather than initiates.<sup>1</sup> Going back to Conchis’s quote, we can see that Conchis allows Nicholas his freedom as a character against the constraints of the godgame, yet his freedom should not depend on any unrealistic utopian future, something Nicholas struggles to overcome

throughout the novel. Nicholas's dilemma is his belief in his fallible existential dogmas that concede of freedom as an invincible power that would enable him to reach any end he wants. He always has fixed plans and fears the arbitrariness of chance which makes his preference for Julie over Alison, at first, a symbolic failure, for the first represents Nicholas's acceptance of his Englishness more than his acceptance of his freedom.

*The French Lieutenant's Woman's* discussion of hazard is integrated in its discussion of Darwin's evolution; the last chapter begins with an epigraph which states that "Evolution is simply the process by which chance ... cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive" (*FLW* 440). Fowles's main Darwinist characters, Charles and Dr Grogan, mistake Darwinism for "an anthropomorphic view of natural selection, one in which humanity is the *telos* or end goal of evolution" (Finney 93). In the novel, Charles thinks of evolution as vertical while Fowles promotes a horizontal one. In making evolution vertical, one must think of, as Brian Finney states, humanity as an ultimate goal to evolution; this belief promotes the opposite of hazard, which is the existence of an all-knowing God that controls its course of change to an end which serves at perfecting the human race and morality. This is the main reason why Fowles's narrator believes that "Charles called himself a Darwinist, and yet he had not really understood Darwin" (*FLW* 47). Charles conception of Darwinism is a typical one of his age, as Tony Jackson argues that Victorians think that Darwin conceives of Evolution as 'progress' and that "the most distinguishing difference between late twentieth-century and nineteenth-century Darwinists involves a strict avoidance of an anthropocentric evolutionary story" (Jackson 223). Twentieth century Darwinists discard vertical evolution and the idea that humans are the most superior species since evolution "is a human-centered teleological story" (224).

This contemporary revision of evolution resides in a re-reading of Darwin by Jay Gould who believes that natural selection is a result of both chance and causality. Gould

believes, as Jackson puts it, that “evolutionary change happens as a function of genetic mutation. Any given mutation occurs at random. Nonetheless, chance gives way to a determined path of development” (224). Charles’s conception of Darwinism matures throughout the novel to come at a realization “that all life was parallel: that evolution was not vertical, ascending to a perfection, but horizontal” (*FLW* 200). His realization is based on his sudden change of mind when he gets Sarah’s note inviting him for a last meeting. Charles sees that his meetings with Sarah, highly controlled by hazard, will lead him to an end that might change the former natural laws he believes in. History cannot be explained in terms of Herbert Spencer’s conception of Darwinism and the idea of the ‘survival of the fittest’; it is rather “partly inherited and contingent” relying on both causality and chance (Pohler 58).<sup>2</sup> This allows more freedom than one can imagine. This is further illustrated by the three evenly possible endings Fowles creates to determine Charles’s evolutionary path. History is proven to be horizontal since the multiplicity of the endings shows equal plausibility rather than the superiority of one ending.

Fowles rejects Spencer’s conception of evolution because it lacks virtual validity; according to Spencer, social classes would always remain the same, with the preserving of the superiority of the upper class and the inferiority of the lower; the reason lies in the upper class being the ‘fittest’ and its survival is the working of “an intelligent behavioral trait [that] is necessary for this kind of evolution” (60). Fowles shows, in his historical novel that portrays the life of Victorians, that the lower class’s culture is the surviving one. The extinction of the gentleman is another evidence of the invalidity of Spencer’s theory. “Cultural selection”, Pohler argues, “is harshest with the upper class, where convention reigns with a firm grip” (60). This is foreseen by Marx in his assumptions about class struggle and the eventual revolution that would be taken by the lower class. It is illustrated in the novel with the survival of Sam over his master, Charles.

Marx argues, in *Das Kapital*, that when wealth falls in the hands of a small minority, which is the upper class in the case of the Victorian age, that minority would eventually weaken which would cause its replacement by a more lively and strong majority. The chapter that starts to describe the relationship between Charles and Sam, and thus the relation between the upper and lower class, opens with an epigraph from Marx's *Das Kapital*. Although Charles, in this chapter, thinks that his condescending and amusing remarks he gives Sam are not taken personally, Sam is bearing them on the account of receiving an amount of money which would assure him his independence from his master. When Charles is denied his inheritance and refuses to marry Ernestina, Sam is left with no other option but to turn against his master and join the revengeful Mr. Freeman.

Putting the Marxist reading apart and turning again towards an evolutionist development of the relationship between the two, Sam does have the right behavioral traits that would ensure his existence over that of Charles.

Hazard is the random interference of the environment which imposes on the surviving being specific selected genetic qualities; these qualities come from the environment and are also inherited from past genetic traits. Thus, the surviving subject must have specific genetic features that would prioritize his existence over another's. Cultural evolution, which is the novel's main concern, follows the same model. Pohler defines it as "the evolution of behavioral traits rather than genetic ones [and which] would involve these same elements of hazard and causality and the same process of acquiring and losing behavioral traits" (61). The difference between Sam and Charles, for instance, which guarantees the survival of Sam over Charles is Sam's newly acquired behavioral traits. He belongs to what "were known as 'swells'" (*FLW* 46), yet Sam's aspiration to ascend his class is shown in his fashionable choice of clothing and his effort "to command the language" (47) which create a 'snob' out of him. Although Charles finds his servant's struggle with his accent and character amusing, he

does not know that his sarcasm is quite insulting to Sam, for the latter is seen, nevertheless, as a 'machine'. Sam belongs to a revolting class whose aim is freedom from social inequality, and even when he has the inherited wrong a's and h's, the narrator believes that "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" (47). That suffering, with the help of Charles's blindness and sense of complacency, defines Sam's behavior after the first ending and explains his act of turning against his master to climb the social ladder.

Although, in existential terms, Sam is not authentic, he is, in evolutionary terms, superior to Charles who inherits behavioral traits from his former ancestors that will come, shortly, to an end. This is our first clue that evolution, even if it promotes freedom through hazard, might not lead to existential authenticity. The authentic being might be in danger of extinction the way Charles is. If Sam would have acted authentically, he would not have survived; he would have joined his master in his doom. However, behavioral (cultural) evolution works in perfect harmony with existential freedom in one case that we will come to shortly, but even this particular case cannot be discussed without some controversy.

Behavioral evolution seems, at first, to put Charles on its right side, for he is a Darwinist, has the right intellectual society (Dr Grogan), is losing his baronetcy, and is offered a right choice of partner. Charles realizes that change is vital to survive, yet he fails. Loveday believes that Charles's failure is the writer's, for "the principle difficulty about accepting this interpretation of the theme of evolution in the book is simply that the chief expounder and most successful exemplar of the theory is none other than Ernestina's father, the business magnate Mr Freeman" (Loveday 65). Yet Mr. Freeman, like Sam, cultural potentiality does not necessarily put him on the right side of existentialist authenticity. His principles are rather material even if he possesses futuristic traits that guarantee his survival. He is described by the narrator as "a forerunner of modern rich commuter" whose institution "was an exceptionally

advanced establishment, a model of its kind” (*FLW* 272). His success is the product of “the great social-economic change that took place between 1850 and 1870—the shift of accent from manufactory to shop, from producer to customer”, and he inherited the right (since they would be selected for cultural survival) character of “Puritan profiteers, who had also preferred hunting sin to hunting the fox” (272). Mr. Freeman’s behavioral traits of inheritance and those he adapts from his environment are perfectly selected for existence and, as we are aware like the narrator of the novel, will be the culturally prevailing features of the next generational species. Thus, unlike Charles, his inherited and newly attained traits are selected for existence. Thus, Sartre’s existential motto of existence preceding essence comes at odds with this Fowlesian conception of evolution. While Charles fails, Mr. Freeman triumphs. However, Mr. Freeman is the only inauthentic character who stands on evolution’s favored side. Mrs. Poulteney and Ernestina are neither existentially free nor selected for existence.

What Mrs. Poulteney inherits and acquires from her existent culture are not selected for survival. One behavioral trait is her Puritanism which puts her in an inferior position to the vicar of the town for he is “the representative of God, before whom she has to metaphorically kneel” and the other is her superior Victorian inheritance which places her in a higher position over the same person, the vicar, for he “depended on her for many of the pleasure of the table” (28). Both behavioral features, as we know the history preceding the Victorian age, are not selected for survival. The coming generation loathes the conservatism of both and Mrs. Poulteney is neither selected for survival nor for authenticity. Ernestina, on the other hand, is as fashionable as Sam, following a revolutionary style “against the crinoline and the large bonnet” (10). She resembles the girls of her age being “so very nearly one of the prim little moppets, the Georginas, Victorias, Albertinas, Matildas and the rest who sat in their closely guarded dozens at every ball” (31). Another feature that betrays Ernestina the most, in comparison to Mary, is her sexual rigidity. As we have seen in the former chapter, Ernestina

conforms to the sexual rules her age implies and she cannot free herself from these conventions. This behavioral feature is not a surviving one since we know that the New Woman who is openly sexual, like Sarah, is the selected for survival in the coming age whose pioneering culture is the feminist movement. Accordingly, Ernestina, as a woman, has features that, even if her father's economic position places her on a better side financially, are not culturally selected or authentically valuable.

We have mentioned earlier that there is one particular character that is an example of a reconciling position which brings the contradictory elements of evolution and existential freedom together. This character is Sarah Woodruff. Sarah is a governess which gives her the right intellectual superiority that Sam and Mary lack. Her intellectual inheritance guarantees not only her survival but also her equality with those who stand high in society. The narrator gives Sarah another prioritizing feature which is futuristic: "we can sometimes recognize the looks of a century ago on a modern face; but never those of a century to come" (176). Sarah uses her intelligence in emancipating herself from her role as a governess. She weaves fictional tales about her involvement with a French lieutenant which frees her by redefining herself as an outcast. She gains the freedom she wishes for from the conservative community she resides in and from the tedious job that is beneath her intellectual and personal integrity. Sarah uses other tools to survive her role as a social case in Mrs. Poulteney's house. She gains Charles's sympathy with a skillful and disguised seduction scheme. Although she knows that Charles's sympathy is finally at hand, she hides herself from him in a house of a well-acclaimed artist, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Sarah realizes that she no longer needs Charles to survive and finds a better alternative which suits her independent role of being who she is, "not what a husband, however kind, however indulgent, must expect me to become in marriage" (430). Critics, in spite of the narrator's effort at promoting Sarah's freedom and survival, see that Sarah's survival is

controversial. Loveday believes that her survival is dependent on the survival of the artistic circle she is in. We know that, through history, the Rossetti movement comes to an end in 1869 and the main artist would be dead in 1872, and so “the role of the outcast maybe closer at the end of the book than Sarah thinks” (Loveday 72). Ellen Shields, Tony Jackson, Eva Mokry Pohler, and Pamela Cooper believe that Sarah’s role in the artistic circle is beneath her intellectual and artistic capacities; she is reduced from a superior position of a potential artist to a model.<sup>3</sup> She, then, adapts to her role as a model rather than rebel against it. Although these arguments are sound and reliable, they deny the futuristic feature that Sarah possesses in comparison to other female characters in the novel. Her role as a model is not one that is authentically superior, but her daring choice of abandoning the typical domestic female role that is imposed by her age is in itself a rare rebellious act. What she learns from this artistic circle is to be taught to her daughter, another evidence for her survival, and is to be passed to another generation of women, not men. Even the death of Rossetti is not to hinder her survival as she is someone who has proven to be intelligent enough in serving her former situations; she has managed to seduce Charles and win his sympathy. She would foresee the end of the Rossetti and make plans for her next step, and since her artistic environment is full of opportunities, it would be easy for her to form other acquaintances which her current environment would help her create.

Charles’s survival and freedom reconciliation is only slightly possible in the third ending according to many critics; however, we believe that the second ending is the one that reconciles evolution with freedom the most, which makes Charles another example of how evolution does not go against the principles of existential freedom. The first ending, which marks his cultural survival since he chooses to marry Ernestina and have many children, guarantees his survival but not his freedom since he has not chosen Sarah; he has also acted against his principles when he joins in Mr. Freeman’s “debas[ing]” enterprise (*FLW* 278). His

inauthentic choice secures him a place of great economic prosperity in society, yet his title of barony is lost which offers no problem, since its cultural value would not survive.

The second ending results from acting according to his principles of refusing Mr. Freeman's offer and of choosing to look for the woman he loves. He ends up marrying Sarah. His cultural and genetic survival, since he comes to know that Sarah's daughter is his own, are secured. However, many critics believe that Charles's decision to marry Sarah will not secure his happiness since "marriage will surely destroy her mystery" (Pohler 66), for he will eventually "understand her parables" (*FLW* 439). Charles's choice of Sarah might be based on the power of her mysterious aura, for he knows nothing about her character except what she tells him; they have not had deeper conversations to make us determine the degree of Charles's happiness after marrying her, yet his choice, in addition to guaranteeing his genetic and cultural survival, is always better than the first and the last since there is the possibility of him liking the actual real, and free, Sarah. When we say free, we mean free from his male, in addition to the narrator's and Fowles's, perception of her. There is another positive addition to this argument which lies in Sarah's good, instead of evil, intention. Accepting Charles makes Sarah honest instead of manipulative. The third ending, on the other hand, shows that she has been working for her own end. The second makes in Sarah a generous and good partner to Charles.

Since Charles is the central character, Sarah's choice is a stroke of hazard. She might refuse Charles's offer of marriage which the last ending embodies. While the last ending secures Charles's freedom, it does not, as the narrator suggests, secure his genetic survival. Neither the reader nor the narrator, or Charles, thinks that the little girl Charles meets at the stairwell is his. His disappointment with Sarah will redefine his relationships with other women as he would celebrate "a celibacy of the heart as total as hers" (444).

A revisionist form of freedom that intersects with cultural evolution is the prevailing theme in Fowles's third novel. The contradiction gives the novel a great profundity, for evolution seems to come against the principles of existential freedom, which is at times true, yet it is not always the case, for some characters, like Sarah and Charles, are put on the winning side of both evolution and existential freedom. What define their actions are individual choices promoted by hazard. If it were not for Hazard, Sarah and Charles would not have met, or experimented with freedom, or evolved into culturally superior species.

Another Fowlesian concept which is connected to hazard and which promotes existential freedom is the 'domaine'. It is the theme that is least discussed in criticism since the concept is not mentioned in Fowles's first non-fictional work, *The Aristos*, but in other published non-fictional essays that follow, among them "The Tree", "The Enigma of Stonehenge", and "Islands".<sup>4</sup> The domaine has a valuable function in the quest of an existentialist and so we find Fowles's initiates moving to isolated places of nature to find themselves before going back again to society. This natural retreat, the domaine, is found in Phraxos in *The Magus*, the Undercliff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and Brittany in "The Ebony Tower" and "The Could". These places have two elements in common: their seclusion and mystery. The aim behind this choice of setting is Fowles's personal fondness of nature and the importance he sees in it for his characters' quest. The domaine lacks human society but it offers an opportunity at feeling one's imagination. According to Fowles, there is a human need for this resort since human nature cannot be separated from nature (Loveday 4). The human being needs to rejuvenate himself through his reconnection with "some golden age, some Garden of Eden" (A 15). In his first chapter, entitled "The Universal Situation", in *The Aristos*, Fowles describes humans' present place as a passing raft which is "on the endless ocean. From his present dissatisfaction man reasons that there was some catastrophic wreck in the past, before which he was happy" (15); his happy past lies in that lost golden 'age' or

‘Eden’ while he is also hopeful that “ahead lies a promised land” (15). The mythical belief resides in every human since everyone is dissatisfied with the present situation of being “*en passage*” (15). The religious man interprets his anxiety with the present situation with a hopeful philosophy that includes a Savior, and so the lost Eden is to be looked for again. The existentialist, on the other hand, must accept his present situation only and define himself accordingly; the past has to be annihilated. Fowles’s initiate is to experience this resort and have his temporary adventure, but only to understand that he has to go back to the real world with more knowledge and equipment and less illusion. The reconnection, according to Fowles, should not be permanent but it is nevertheless important.

Hazard is what finally reconnects Fowles’s characters with this ‘promised land’.

Robert Huffaker writes:

*Living reality* is never the elusive balance itself, but rather cycles of counteraction between opposites. With Fowles’s belief in hazard and mystery, fixing absolute equilibrium is impossible and illusory; Fowles’s reality is *the quest itself* – man’s search for balance somewhere amid nature’s extremes, through her vast forests, which conceal both dangers and delights. (118)

Fowles’s initiates understand the importance and the illusory nature of the domaine, yet what brings balance to their lives is the quest itself. The present situation they live after the quest is different since they understand the complex ‘reality’ behind their passage on the raft. Hazard and mystery do not bring them perfection but knowledge, knowledge of their own nature as Loveday believes that “at the deepest level, when Fowles’s heroes enter their domaine they penetrate not only into nature but also into their own nature” (Loveday 5).

The mythical experience Fowles’s initiates go through stems from two sources of inspiration. The first is the myth of Robin Hood where the images of the outlaw and the isolated island are in harmony; the outlaw is the modern outcast or alien to society and the

island is his source of sanctuary and rejuvenation.<sup>5</sup> The second source is Fowles's favorite fictional work, Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, which has a more direct relation with the concept since the work tells a story of Meaulnes looking for his 'domaine perdu'. In the Forward of the revised version of *The Magus*, Fowles writes of the influence as one that is necessary "to provide and experience beyond the literary" (M 6). This experience, especially in *The Magus*, is inspired from the writer's own in Greece where he "taught in 1951 and 1952 at a private boarding-school" (7). We can clearly see the same pattern of the story in all Fowles's fiction.

Augustin Meaulnes is a young and new boarder to the private school of the narrator's father, Sainte-Agathe. The school is situated in a wildly natural world in the French countryside. The narrator, Francois Seurel, finds in Meaulnes a great sense of adventure that inspires him and soon the two engage in small adventures after the school hours. Meaulnes, along with Francois, is lost one day on his way to bring the narrator's grandparents from the train station. They both enter a domaine of a feast in the country side in which Meaulnes finds his *princesse lointaine*, Yvonne de Galais. Yvonne represents Meaulnes's perfect idea of a woman in the same way Julie does for Nicholas. The domaine comes to a sudden end and both boys have to go back to their school where life is never the same. When they finally find the domaine again, it is not the same magical place they experienced. The boys might have grown more mature to feel the same in the adolescent world they once enjoyed. Its mysteries help them bond and come to a greater knowledge of themselves but it cannot be experienced in the same way. Here lies the importance of Fowles's domaine. It has to be temporary to offer his initiates the freedom they need, but that freedom is to help them choose to 'be' rather than to 'have'. Another importance lies in the theme of 'loss'. Fowles writes of his experience after his departure from Greece as unbearable: "the withdrawal symptoms were severe. I had not then realized that loss is essential for the novelist, immensely fertile for his books, however

painful for his private being” (9), and so it is for his characters. However, this loss is necessary for their growth, for “it supplies – like the image of exile and the idea of the island – a place from which one can survey the ‘other’. Loss implies doubleness. You had something, now you don’t” (Reynolds and Noakes 8). They have to redefine themselves according to the other at first, free themselves of the other, and then reencounter the other in the light of a new knowledge.

The pattern in Alain-Fournier’s *Le Grand Meaulnes* and in Fowles’s fiction follows also the tradition of the quest in medieval romance. Fowles argues in his “A Personal Note” to “*Eliduc*” that Marie de France is the main source for the novel and believes that every writer of fiction must see that “the naiveties and primitive technique of stories such as *Eliduc*” signify “his own birth” (ET 118-9). The *domaine* in medieval romance is a pattern of great importance, for every initiate must go through an adventure which implies his mobility from one place to another secluded and natural setting; in the latter he has to exclude himself from society in order to find his true self, for it cannot be faced unless he defines it separately from the other in a separate place that identifies with his newly embraced nothingness. This nothingness is human nature itself which finds itself at home in nature. Loveday believes that nature, being both “special and separate” which makes his approach to nature an “existential projection of the *domaine*” (Loveday 142). This approach, which is found in both the existential quest and the pattern of the Romance, has been used to emphasize the importance of “man as logically prior to society” (142). When man goes back to nature, he frees himself completely; his return to society afterwards, since it is necessarily for him to return since the *domaine* is always temporary, comes to change his attitude towards the other and himself. To Fowles, the return brings change to society itself since every person is a world in himself.

The theme is prominently used in *The Magus*; however, we find elements of seclusion to nature in every other work of fiction with the exception of *The Collector* since Miranda is

imprisoned in an air-ridden basement. Pamela Cooper conceptualizes the setting as an ‘negative domaine’ or a “savagely deromanticized domaine” since it enslaves instead of frees its initiate (Cooper 20). This ‘anti-domaine’ “is present by its absence” (Loveday 27). However, there are few scenes in the novel where Clegg agrees to walk Miranda out in the house’s garden. The importance of nature is accentuated because of its rarity and Miranda’s experience is more effective on the reader than Nicholas’s or Charles’s. She immerses herself with all her senses. Miranda’s attitude to nature is contrasted to that of Clegg. While Clegg sees it as a dangerous place where he carefully watches Miranda in, Miranda does not see him at all, for his dead-like figure is contrasted with the “so living, so full of plant smells and country smells and the thousand mysterious wet smells of the night” (C 145). The garden is the only space that resembles Fowles’s celebrated domaines; it is Clegg’s house and basement that represents an anti-domaine. Their seclusion is not open or natural. In comparison to other Fowlesian domaines, the basement is too commonplace and lacks the mystery. It is, unlike Bourani, unbearably decorated with ostentatious furnishings that are repulsive to Miranda; in addition to Clegg’s unpleasant taste, the doors are reinforced with ten-inch bolts that add a sinister touch to the setting. Although the house, with its basement, is seen as an anti-domaine, it is rather an extreme version of other coming examples of the domaine, for “the novel emphasizes those negative aspects of the domaine which later fictions suggest less directly: the unhealthiness of its isolation, the irresponsible nature of relationships formed within it, its capacity to entrap and stifle even as it protects” (Cooper 20). This unhealthiness is undergone by Nicholas’s experience of Bourani/Greece as a domaine, Charles’s of the Undercliff, and Williams’s of Coëtminais. The reason for its unhealthiness is a misreading of the seclusion as ultimate exclusion from reality. All these characters see what the domaine’s promises of mystery offer, which is, if the initiate is to expect its permanency, dangerous. It is what one learns in relation to the outside world and oneself that makes the domaine effective and

harmless. Although the domaine is special and sacred, it must always be temporary. The most important woman in Nicholas's life is Alison, yet she is discovered outside the novel's domaine, which embodies the biggest, yet finite, part in the novel.

Nicholas meets Alison in London when he is still in need for a place of rejuvenation. He is at first selfish and cold, unable to 'feel' the way Alison, the most authentic character, feels. He then moves to Greece to teach in a private school for boys; he is instantly mystified with Greece the way he would be later with Lily/Julie. Greece in the novel represents both: the natural world and the ideal world. By the ideal, we mean the mysterious. England represents the real mundane world and society. Nicholas's escape from England is a symbolic escape from society as whole. His need resides in a natural desire for a reconnection with himself. This does not mean that Alison's relation to the mundanity of London is inferior to that of Julie's relation to Greece/Bourani. It is actually the opposite. The relation of Julie to the mysterious world underlines the unhealthiness of the relationship Nicholas is to go through, yet that relationship has to be experienced for Nicholas to redefine his values about love. Thus, Greece/Bourani is a necessary stage in Nicholas's life for it is a setting of freedom, "a journey into space" (M 49). The word 'space' indicates the exotic quality of the setting, for as 'place' is home-like, space represents mystery and freedom.

Modernist and postmodernist writings are reflections of a reality of an identity crisis the modern man, who is mostly the author himself, goes through. Writers, like Fowles, experience some irrational restlessness that consciousness alone can no longer contain because its roots encompass multiple cultural and psychological upheavals. The Chinese-American geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan, says in his *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* that "place is security, space is freedom" (Tuan 3). Transgressing spaces is part of the process of self redefinition and transformation, while keeping to one place indicates security. Nicholas, like his writer, displays a desire, from the very start, for freedom. This desire is strong enough

to enable him to let go of everything, whether valuable or not, that attaches him to that cultural and psychological universality. Another reason for Nicholas's desire to experience space is the lack of security he feels at home. However, his relationship with Alison, shortly before he travels to Greece, adds a sense of anxiety that is new to him. He acts inauthentically by safely breaking the relationship which would offer him the security he is looking for.

The experience Greece offers to Nicholas is life changing: "I was standing on Mars, knee-deep in thyme, under a sky that seemed never to have known dust or cloud. I looked down at my pale London hands. Even they seemed changed, nauseatingly alien, things I should long ago have disowned" (*M* 49). Greece annihilates, in existential terms, the other, which is Nicholas's Englishness. For Nicholas to finally accept Alison for what she is, he has to annihilate his English values of a perfect woman and they are only annihilated in Greece.

The first gift Nicholas is offered in the domaine is an illumination about his own character with the help of nature. When he tries to commit suicide at the beginning of his residence in Greece, he realizes that, with the interference of a "solitary voice of a girl [who] was singing wildly [and whose voice] sounded disembodied, of place, not person" (61). The voice adds to the natural obscurity of the setting and at once makes Nicholas aware of the triviality of the narcissistic and theatrical quality of his attempt of suicide. In here lies Nicholas's first realization of his own selfishness, which explains Conchis's statement shortly afterwards that "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn" (99). During Nicholas's residence in Greece, Alison visits, and he meets her in the most magical setting, Parnassus. It is exactly in this moment of experience (his second after the suicide scene) that Nicholas realizes that he loves Alison, even if he is still mystified with Julie. The place becomes a symbol of light where the "sun was still just above the horizon, but the clouds had vanished", for the peak of the mountain "reached up into a world both literally and metaphorically of light" (258). Light has a metaphorical significance of the knowledge that

Nicholas gains after this almost religious experience. As Nicholas's first experience is enlightening, the second is almost religious, and through both he starts to "penetrate some of his own disguises" (Loveday 34). However, Nicholas keeps on learning and Greece keeps on teaching the way Conchis does.

Conchis is partly English and partly Greek and it is through his "Greekness" (*M* 434) that he inspires a change in Nicholas since his Greekness, and Greece, are the 'Other' to Nicholas. It is through the exotic land and Conchis that Nicholas comes to know himself better since they are separate from what is familiar to Nicholas. According to Jacques Lacan, the 'Other' defines the normal standard of being and it is through the Other that we come to better know ourselves. Accordingly, every desire is a desire of being, and the Other "in whose gaze the subject gets identity" is the most important component in that being (Bill Ashcroft, et al. 140). Thus, both Greece and Conchis are like a mirror on which Nicholas's self reflects. The exotic and mysterious qualities of both baffle Nicholas's sense of being and the company of Julie and June gives him back a sense of familiarity; he constantly feels the need of "their warmth, normality, Englishness" (*M* 412). It is this sense of familiarity that Conchis is trying to shock in Nicholas's sense of selfhood. When he goes back to London, he does not seek the Alison he perceives at first as an Australian other but as someone who is both different from him and special on her own. He finally frees himself, and Alison, from his Englishness.

The permanency of the domaine is of danger to every resident and Nicholas is no exception. Although it is separate and unique, it should be temporary. In *The Magus*, it is in direct relation to Conchis's godgame and Nicholas's attachment to it is a sign of immaturity. That is the reason why Alison resides outside the domaine; her superiority, which is promoted by the author himself, lies in her 'reality' while Julie and Lily are part of the godgame, of the domaine. The domaine is a world of immaturity, even if it is a world that brings freedom and change, and clinging to it is clinging to a lost phase of boyhood and adolescence rather than

manhood. Meaulnes, like Nicholas, strives to go back to that magical world in wild France, but, unlike Nicholas, when he finally finds it, it does not feel the same. What happens to Meaulnes is maturity that is caused by the experience after the domaine in the mundane world.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Ebony Tower*, the domaine is not a major theme; however, it has a strong influence, especially in the first novel, on the lives of the main characters. Charles meets the unconventional Sarah in the natural world of the Undercliff. Sarah resembles the wilderness of the place and society offers her no security. That is why the Undercliff is related to life whereas the world outside it, including Charles's beloved Winsyatt, is the conventional monster that Charles and Sarah are trying to escape. In it, both characters start their romance, which explains why its end comes outside it. Like Greece/Bourani, it is a temporary world which urges Charles to make more authentic and free decisions. Even Sarah is linked to this fantasy world, for she is perceived as a 'sphinx' and a 'siren' by Charles; her reality is thus denied because Charles's relationship with her does not outlive the fantastic realm of the Undercliff, yet this world, along with its *princesse lointaine*, generates a passion for freedom in the main protagonist. Charles, before this experience, has a closed-up character. After it, he changes into a more open person; he thus keeps moving from one place to another until he decides, although it is not clear at the end, to move back to the 'New World', a place that annihilates convention and offers liberty.

In "The Ebony Tower", the domaine is a permanent residence of the artist Breasely. He is the authentic artist that Williams, the initiate, wishes to be. The world of Coëtminais is a Bourani-like setting where Conchis is less verbal. Williams resides in it temporarily, yet he leaves it in a state of less triumph than that of Nicholas and Charles. The point Fowles wants to make through this is that the domaine is a world of immaturity and magic which is of great benefit to the creator of art but not for the moral being that fits in society. Fowles spends most of his life in Lyme Regis roaming its natural corners, choosing a permanent residence in the

domaine. However, he sees it unfit for most of his characters. The exception made for Breasly is the exception Fowles makes for himself. Fowles declared in an interview that Williams could “have become a better artist, but he would have betrayed his moral being. I’m pointing out that being an artist is an appalling selfish business” (qtd. in Acheson 50). Williams’s choice is not as celebrated as Charles’s and Nicholas’s because his aim is to be an artist. Nicholas is a failed artist and thus he is better suited as a moralist.

Fowles finds many ways to allow his character a path of existential freedom. Some of these ways seem to be even contradictory to its premises. He thus authenticates Sartre’s conception of freedom to create one that allows a variety of themes that no other writer explored before. To link hazard and evolution to existential freedom is a brave and authentic attempt that has produced more depth to Fowles’s existentialist reading. The domaine, on the other hand, is promoted on the basis of its temporariness, and the freedom it teaches is always questionable as it is sometimes the result of immaturity. This also adds another contradiction to Sartre’s conception of absolute freedom. The aim of the temporariness of the domaine is to meet the immature needs of the initiate and mirror them back to him after a certain disruption in the real world.

### 3.2. The Few and Existential Authenticity: Mentors and Novices

In the former chapter, we have explored the conception of existential inauthenticity, the Many, and the potential Few. The Many are hopelessly inauthentic, yet the potential Few are searchers of freedom and they gain full membership only when they succeed at their initiation into a certain existential quest. These members describe a state of in-betweenness, for they are neither the “unthinking, conforming mass” Fowles refers to as the Many nor the “intellectual *élite*” yet (A 9). However, they have the intellectual potentiality of self-questioning that the members of the Many are denied. In order to reach the excellence of the *aristoi*, these potential members have to choose to break up with the path of convention which

the ‘conforming mass’ finds rewarding. In other words, they have to embrace their existential anguish and take the alternative way that defines their true selves, the way of Nietzsche’s overman. Only then do they achieve their authenticity and gain full membership of the Few.

The potential Few are pushed forward by hazard, an accident that changes the course of the reliability of their routine. What is questionable about Fowlesian hazard is the sameness of its pattern in his fiction even though hazard is supposed to be an unpredictable and arbitrary interference of chance. The young initiate, first, feels unhappy in his society; he then meets a mentor, an official member of the Few in an old man’s figure; he is later helped by an aloof female character who is to play the role of “the agent of change” (Loveday 3) to reconcile his animus with his anima; at the end, he learns something about himself and his capacities and embarks on a journey free from the domaine, the text, the writer, and eventually the reader. This pattern is not meant to control the conception of hazard as it is meant to describe the existential journey incorporated, smoothly, in the romance genre. The importance of the mentor lies in the relationship he has with his novice. The former is a more mature version of the novice and thus his future mirrored self.

The theme of this initiation from the novice’s former immature and inexistential self to existential authenticity is the “principal theme” (A 9) in his fiction. Fowles, as his narrator in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, believes that “every culture ... needs a kind of self-questioning, ethical elite, and one that is bound by certain rules of conduct, some of which may be very unethical ... though their hidden purpose is good: to brace or act as structure for the better effects of their function in history” (FLW 285). This chosen elite, like Miranda, Nicholas, Charles, and Williams, are ‘self-questioning’ and even ‘unethical’ at times since the mainstream for ‘ethical’ belongs to the herd. Unconventional and separate are other characteristics that result from their analytical selves. Freedom, which is generated by other elements like hazard, evolution, and the domaine (as we have seen in the former section),

leads the novice to attain a new conception of himself that oblige him to annihilate a former self that defines him within his culture. This helps the novice evolve culturally, politically, and existentially into an individualist, which explains why the mentors in Fowles' fiction have a liberal and culture-free identity. This identity mirrors the philosophy of existentialism that Fowles promotes, for he believes that the main thesis of his works is "that one has to discover one's feelings" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 42) which is a priority over one's place in his culturally and religiously pre-defined existence.

Although Fowles presents us with mature authentic characters and official members of the Few, he makes them distant and unreachable preachers. The reader relates more to the novice than to his mentor, and so the conception of existential authenticity is unattainable through the latter since it is presented in the same way as it is presented in works of existential philosophy; that is didactically. It is through the novices that we reach a gradual and realistic development of character that can help us shape a concrete definition of the concept. However, the mentors help guide the process in which the novices learn about their own true feelings; they also help them against those feelings if they are to lead them towards 'collecting' and objectifying women. Thus, mentors are meant to promote a certain freedom reconciled with a sense of responsibility towards seeing the other as a free individual.

These mentors are mostly male, with the exception of Sarah Woodruff in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Even Sarah is mostly seen as a *princesse lointaine* than a mentor. Most critics believe that Dr Grogan is Charles's mentor; Dr Grogan shares Charles's futuristic openness that is absent in his and Charles's Victorian generation. The maleness of the mentors, together with the maleness of the initiates (with the exception of Miranda), facilitates the initiation by ridding it of the sexual attraction that would pre-define it. G.P., Conchis, Dr Grogan, and Breasley are magus figures who, sometimes sadistically, help enlighten their novices through brutal experiences that produce a self-loathe for a former undesired and

inauthentic self. They are the Prospero, which is openly alluded to by Fowles in both *The Collector* and *The Magus*, of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In our analysis of the relationship between the mentors and the novices, we will focus on the latter since our access to the former's character is not possible. Fowles uses first person narrators, like in *The Collector* and *The Magus*, as novices and so our complete access to their mentors is scarce. In *The French Lieutenant's Women*, the access is denied by the omniscient narrator by the excuse that his characters have free will of their own; the fortunate contradiction lies in his knowledge of Charles's mind, for the story is mostly told from an angle that centralizes him as a character. In *The Collector*, the novice fails to attain physical freedom from her captor, Clegg, and so she is denied an opportunity to experiment and apply her theories about existential freedom. She remains a potential Few and her potentiality dies when she does at the end of the novel. Through Miranda, we have access to G.P.'s theories about art, freedom and his relationships. He is, in spite of her friends' objectionable comments, true to himself. The reason for G.P.'s importance lies in his influence on Miranda as an artist. He guides her through and pushes her to become a less derivative artist: "you're saying something here about Nicholson or Pasmore. Not about yourself. You're using a camera. Just as trompe-Voeil is mischannelled photography, so is painting in someone else's style. You're photographing here" (C 169). Through G.P., Miranda understands the difference between authentic art and inauthentic, derivative, photographic art. She even starts guiding Clegg accordingly. Photography and painting are used as symbolic motifs for authentic and inauthentic arts, yet what we know about G.P. is a set of morals about art and life but never a concrete illustration of behavioral elements that would further materialize the meaning of the word authenticity. Nevertheless, it is the case of most of the mentors in Fowles's fiction. What G.P. also shares with the other mentors is his god-like, omnipotent, condescending attitude that encourages a sadomasochistic relationship between himself and his initiate. Miranda, being a first female initiate, is

somehow sexualized into this sadomasochism which is the main reason why Fowles uses male initiates in his later novels.

Conchis, the second mentor to the second novel, is a secondary character. *The Magus* was initially entitled, in the first draft, as 'The Godgame'. Fowles even expresses certain regret in changing the title to 'The Magus' (Reynolds and Noakes 12). He believes that the word 'Godgame' describes better the purpose of the novel which is "the pursuit of the idea that life really is a huge game between us and God, or whatever you choose to take as God" (13). Conchis is then a representative of God, yet he is also the god that Fowles imagines, a 'trickster' or a 'magician'. Although Conchis does not have inhuman powers, he is the master of theatrical creation. He plays a Prospero-like role and stages visual and narratorial manipulations to shock Nicholas's sense of superior intellectualism. Conchis's role is like that of a magus. The magus is one of the cards in the Tarot deck which makes the seventy-eight chapters of the novel correspond to the seventy eight cards. The symbolic allusion emphasizes the fantastic element in the novel. Like Nicholas, the reader is tricked into believing that the game Conchis creates for Nicholas has meaning. What Conchis urges Nicholas to perceive is that the theatre has no meaning to instill. Everything, including Conchis, is an illusion, which explains the staging of his death at the end of the novel. The death of Conchis signals the freedom of Nicholas to live in a godless world where he is to experiment with a limitless freedom and a greater sense of responsibility that comes with that freedom.

The role of Conchis is to help in the existential development and psychological growth of his novice. He tells him stories from his life and later enacts them, with the help of some actors, in a fantastic and perplexing meta-theatre which aspires to educate Nicholas out of his condescending sense of superiority and desire to fantasize and confuse real life with fiction. He even hypnotizes him to understand the inner workings of his psyche. He works on staging his most buried desires and fears and asks Nicholas to soak in the effect without analyzing.

We have seen in the former chapter how Nicholas is, before the masque, too dependent on fictionalizing reality. He embraces existentialism because he thinks that the pursuit of freedom is superior to his commitment to any human being that would endanger that freedom.

Accordingly, there is no sense of responsibility; his adolescent self is deeply inherent in his immature and perverted conception of the world around him. He leaves London, and Alison, behind, for he believes that both hinder his thirst for freedom. Bourani, and Conchis's masques, offers the best experimental experiences that present the right challenge to the intelligent Nicholas who sees the mundane Alison and London unfit to trigger a spiritual growth. Conchis, then, plays on this particular narrow-mindedness.

Being "the mysterious orchestrator of ontological games" (Cooper 56), he produces meaningless fictions and dream-like experiences that baffle both Nicholas and the reader. According to Katherine Tarbox, the reason for such incoherence and phantasmagoric education lies in Nicholas's "rigid narrative mentality, where he processes experience casually, expecting to find coherence, patterns, intelligibility and meaning" ("The Silence of Spent Voices: Narrative and Image in *The Magus*" 77). Nicholas wants to find meanings and reasons for his election when Conchis insists that it is hazard that elects him. He believes that the game is meant to torment him in particular, yet Conchis insists that everything that is happening is meant to challenge a quality in Nicholas that longs for explanation and coherence when our godless universe lacks this feature. Conchis wants to teach Nicholas about the complexity of life and that our free choices should be calculated for the sole reason that ultimate freedom comes with great responsibility.

The key towards understanding, relatively, what Nicholas's education is about lies in his relation to the female characters in the novel. Alison is the only female character that acts in a resistant way to Nicholas's obsessive narrative rigidity and the reader must have a feeling that she is the one he is supposed to end up with. Since Nicholas is unable to categorize her,

for she has an unpredictable character that both attracts and repulses him, he conceptualizes her as “a kind of human oxymoron” (*M* 24). Nicholas then prefers the simplicity of Julie over the complexity of Alison. Julie is easily categorized; Conchis helps the categorization by giving her roles of mythical women in the masque. Her Englishness makes Nicholas more at home than Conchis’s Greekness and Alison’s Australianness. He categorizes and sorts Conchis’s stories and masques in the hope of claiming his superiority as a reader and finding a home in Bourani. Conchis starts his education by challenging these rigid conceptions of the English cultural superiority, and the first story he tells narrates his experience in WWI and how he faces the most intricate choice of either participating in the war and prove his patriotism to Lily, his intended, or be true to himself and his beliefs and quit the battle. To him, the war is “some barbarous crime of civilization, some terrible human lie” which seeks to veil the fact that “there is no plan” (128-9). Lily represents traditions and ideals of patriotism and duty while Conchis “was free” and fighting in the Great War meant sacrificing his “true self” (152). Conchis wants to show Nicholas the real meaning of existential authenticity by telling him “not a tale of shameful cowardice but a triumph of personal integrity” (Acheson 23). The first story of Conchis describes the importance of authenticity over social and political convention, even over love, for Lily is a symbol of “humanity both crucified and marching towards the cross” (*M* 152).

The second story is the story of an art collector, the wealthy De Deukans. De Deukans was Conchis’s mentor and was a god-like figure in his life the way Conchis is to Nicholas. What Conchis is careful to convey to Nicholas is also a nihilistic statement about this claim, for he tells him that “you must not think that I know every answer” (185). Conchis’s repudiation of his role as a god is a repudiation of an ordered world that has no mystery. Conchis goes on to ask Nicholas the same question De Deukans asks him “which are you drinking? The water or the wave?” (188) and the answer to the question signifies “a mirror” to

one's true self. Water is the generalized version of the wave and when one is attracted to the former one is inauthentic. Water stands for humanity and the herd while the wave stands for the individual whose formation takes specific conditions to arrive at the shore. The question is meant to be asked by Nicholas to himself to understand, through a specific answer, why he is attracted to Julie and Alison. His attraction to Julie is an attraction of a pre-defined prototype of a woman that has been defined by history as 'femininely' superior. Thus, Julie is 'the water'. Alison, on the other hand, is the wave, for she stands for unpredictability and authentic individualism that even the potentially Few, Nicholas, lacks at first. Both Julie and Alison mirror Nicholas's double self, and his inability to choose in Parnassus between both women is his inability to decide what his true self is.

Yet even on Parnassus, Nicholas is unable to see Alison for her individualism for he is too fixated on decoding and possessing rather than freeing both women from their role as "Eve" (269). Alison's directness and simplicity meets Julie's manipulation and sophistication in an 'Eve-like' female prototype. Alison, after Nicholas's confession of having another woman in his life, acts in a natural spontaneity resulting from an emotional breakdown that puts Nicholas's bets on her on hold. He goes back to his residence and receives a letter from Alison that lacks the propriety of his Englishness, yet it stresses her honest feelings towards his theatrical love affair with herself and Julie: "Think what it would be like if you got back to your island and there was no old man, no girl any more. No mysterious fun and games. The whole place locked up forever. It's finished finished finished" (278). Nicholas does realize at the end of the masque Alison's real value and finds in her "truth-seeking eyes" (246) a warmth that is lacking in Julie's sophisticated manners.

The question asked by Conchis does not align him with De Deukans; the purpose of the story of De Deukans is to, unlike what Nicholas thinks, align Nicholas to De Deukans. It is intended to teach Nicholas about the danger of prioritizing a fantasy world over a real one. De

Deukans is a collector of art and we have already defined Fowles's stand on collectors when we analyzed the character of Clegg in the former chapter. Collectors deny their anima in favor of their masculine quality of possessing. Collectors thrive for isolation and artificizing life; they are immoral aesthetes whose power lies in the deadened quality of their passions. An important deadened possession that De Deukans owns is Mirabelle, '*La Maitresse-Machine*', that signifies his sexual onanism and misogyny. This sexual onanism is also shared with Nicholas who has "a masturbatory personality" ("A Critical Study of the Novels of John Fowles" 28). What both characters share is the lack of the feminine principle that would allow them to decategorize women and reconcile themselves to their anima, which would help them in their emotional growth. It is the choice of love over sexuality that allows Nicholas freedom from his restricted sense of 'thinking' towards the "dimension of feeling" (*M* 413).

Conchis conjures a dream-like metatheatre to the story of De Deukans, and other stories, to describe the hypnotic reaction to the story on the unconscious level in Nicholas's psyche. While Nicholas analyzes these appearances, the theatre is resistant to his epistemology, for it is reminiscent of his dreams. This idea is inspired from C. C. Jung's work on dreams. In his interviews he admits that he "owe[s] a great deal to Freud and Jung" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 165) and that what attracts him to these two psychoanalysts is "the view that Freud and Jung were both very close to novelists themselves, or myth creators" (109). Fowles creates his myths based on Freud and Jung's perception of the individual psyche and its relation to mystery. While *The French Lieutenant's Woman* takes on the mother complex, popularly termed the Oedipus complex, in Charles's relation to Sarah who embodies the lost sister and mother, *The Magus* takes on Jung's interpretations of dreams that are influenced by the Greek dream healing. Conchis's fantastic enacting of Nicholas's most disturbing inner world is aimed at presenting Nicholas with elements that are unreachable to him.

Nicholas's reaction to these elements is constantly wrong, for instead of making "no hypothesis" (*M* 134), he keeps on creating and distorting patterns that make the metatheatrical a coherent whole. Jung believes that dreams are symbolic of a world beyond our reach. He writes:

I have noticed that dreams are as simple or as complicated as the dreamer is himself, only they are always a little bit ahead of the dreamer's consciousness. I do not understand my own dreams any better than any of you, for they are always somewhat beyond my grasp and I have the same trouble with them as anyone who knows nothing about dream interpretation. Knowledge is no advantage when it is a matter of one's own dreams. (*Analytical Psychology: Its Theory and Practice* 90)

The last sentence is the key to understanding Conchis's aim in regards to Nicholas's reaction. A great advance in therapy is exposition to these symbols without an attempt to analyze since what they offer is 'compensation' for an imbalance in the unconscious level of the psyche. This level is Nicholas's feminine level. The first dream he has after De Deukans's story is about the brutal satyr "conquer[ing] the feminine" ("The Silence of Spent Voices: Narrative and Image in *The Magus*" 80). The enacted play after this dream is one which Conchis unites Rose with the hyper masculine Anubis, the jackal-headed god who rules the underworld of kings. The image is stirring and unsettling and effectively leaves Nicholas unable to see through it. It is after this play that Conchis resurrects Lily from the dead. Lily, the archetypal feminine perfection, meets Nicholas, the satyr of his own fantastic world. The meeting takes Nicholas back to his rigid narrative mentality and reads her encounter as a failed 'performance', for she is less of an actress and more of a real seducer; as a result, he "had been set to chase from the moment I saw her" (*M* 202). Lily, as a result, plays the role Nicholas

plays with the women he meets, including Alison, in the novel to teach him the importance of compassion instead of detachment.

Conchis continues his hypnotizing sessions. In one of these sessions, Nicholas arrives at a sense of being that is new to him; all conceptions and meanings are meaningless: “reality was endless interaction. No good, no evil; no beauty, no ugliness. No sympathy, no antipathy. But simply interaction” (239). Nicholas lets go of his rigid narrative mentality and surrenders to this newly attained sense of being. He feels “volitionless. There was no meaning. Only being” (239). After this experience, which at first seems quite effective, Nicholas goes back to his old self and starts analyzing and reading the masque from the perspective of an epistemological superiority. However, a change occurs when he meets Alison and realizes that he does love her, yet he also admits to loving Julie/Lily as well. The confusion is still there. The masculine constituent in Nicholas’s psyche is still the prevailing one, for he refuses to let his love triumph over his idealization of Julie’s masturbatory sexual encounter. Tarbox still believes that Nicholas “has a moment of intense breakthrough followed by a swift return to his old familiar self” (“The Silence of Spent Voices: Narrative and Image in *The Magus*” 82). Nicholas, then, rejects Alison’s love in favor of the continuance of being ‘enchanted’ by the masque.

Despite Nicholas’s constant analysis of the situations laid for him, the potency of the images of the dreams Conchis instills in him work organically and the dreamer takes time to absorb them. Nicholas, during the disintoxication period, admits to taking in the experience “osmotically” (577) even when he is trying to understand these images and their symbolic significance. He grows into what Conchis wishes him to grow, a compassionate person.

Nicholas, after his short enlightening experience with Alison, flees back to Bourani. Conchis resumes his therapeutic sessions, and the third story and dream he works with is that of Seidvarre. The story tells the religious experience of Henrik Nygaard, a hermit he meets

when he travels to Norway to study the high Arctic birds. Conchis is housed by the hermit's brother and during his stay he observes the seclusion of Nygaard and tries to understand the meaning of his communion with God. At first, it seems that the mad Nygaard is trying "to meet God" but then Conchis realizes that "he was meeting God; and had been meeting him probably for many years. He was not waiting for some certainty. He lived in it" (308).

Conchis's reaction to Nygaard's solipsistic epiphanies is interpreted in two ways. One sees that he regards Nygaard as a role model that guides the elite to greater knowledge. Acheson is certain that the hermit's union with God is symbolic of the consciousness's union with the unconscious which results in a psychological balance that allows a certain superiority of the individual whose experience resembles "a profound religious experience" (Acheson 24).

Acheson relies on Jung's assumption that Christ is a symbol of a higher subconscious being in the human psyche; the symbolic significance is that of a god within a man. Our lack of absolute understanding to the world around stems from this imperfect relation between our conscious beings and the invisible divine-like power within us. Thus, according to Conchis, "Nygaard is to be envied, for even this kind of limited self-knowledge eludes the vast majority of people" (24). What Acheson means by 'limited' is Conchis's belief that even if Nygaard "lacked God, he had the Holy Spirit" (*M* 309). Nicholas, like the majority of people, is rather rationally oriented. Conchis is trying to teach Nicholas, according to this reading, that spiritual self-fulfillment is more important than self-knowledge. The spiritual self Conchis is referring to is not the omnipotent Christian God but rather the vast mysteriousness and unintelligibility of reality: "The great passive monster, reality, was no longer dead, easy to handle. It was full of a mysterious vigour, new forms, new possibilities. The net was nothing, reality burst through it. Perhaps something telepathic passed between Henrik and myself" (309).

Katherine Tarbox suggests a second reading to the Seidvarre episode. She believes that Conchis's view of Nygaard is similar to that of De Deukans. He sees Nicholas in both

characters. While his denial of the anima is similar to that of De Deukans's, his sense of superiority is like that of Nygaard. The latter believes that he is "elect, especially chosen to be punished and tormented" (302) in the same way Nicholas does in Bourani. They both cannot see that "destiny is hazard" and their election is hazardous. What Nygaard teaches Conchis is what Conchis is trying to teach Nicholas, that his "scientific, medical, classifying" approach is wrong and that absolute meaning is "a world beyond" (309). This new conception of the world brings 'humility' to those who are too eager to know since they would have to learn that knowing is impossible. The second reading is more plausible since Nicholas, like Nygaard, sees Conchis as a source of enchantment and knowledge and the reason for his election. When Conchis abandons him, he keeps looking for him in Bourani in a state of anger and deceit of one who has realized that God is no longer there. His resentment to Conchis is "*not that he had done what he did, but that he had stopped doing it*" (553). Yet even this story works organically within Nicholas's psyche, and he does not achieve complete maturity until he is disintoxicated after the fourth story.

The fourth story comes after an act where Nicholas plays the role of a captor forced into an episode of the Nazi's occupation of Greece. Conchis, after the enactment of the story takes place with Nicholas baffled at its meaning, satisfies the latter's curiosity and recounts the story of his involvement in the Second World War. The chapter which is concerned with this story is the only entitled chapter in the novel. The title is the Greek word for freedom: 'Eleutheria'. Freedom is paralleled with its opposite, responsibility. Conchis faces the most important lesson in his life when he is forced by a sadistic Nazi officer, Wimmel, to choose either clubbing to death two Greek resistance fighters or accepting the death sentence of eighty villagers. To Conchis, the choice is the most difficult in his life. Observing the two men who have already suffered a harsh punishment of teeth breaking and tongue burning, Conchis knows exactly what he has to do. Hearing the word 'freedom' cried by one of these fighters in

spite of the state he is in makes Conchis aware of his own freedom and he chooses to embrace it because it is “more important than common sense, self-preservation, yes, than my own life, than the lives of the eighty hostages” (434). To kill those two fighters is to act in a barbarian inhuman way. He then makes a choice that is selfless and primarily governed by a universal “moral imperative” (441). The freedom Conchis realizes is a freedom beyond categorizations, for he finds himself neither on the side of the resistance nor on the side of Wimmel; he chooses what he thinks of as freedom ridded of all national, political, and social slogans.

Nicholas is supposed to understand that existential freedom does not mean seeking one’s desires only. Exercising that freedom is a responsibility that needs the elite of humanity to govern it. Conchis chooses to tell the story of Wimmel after he fakes Alison’s suicide in which Nicholas mourns in the same “aesthetic” sense “where it is easier to live with” (401). The violence of Wimmel is also reminiscent of Nicholas’s even though Nicholas does not see it. Conchis times the story after the meeting of Nicholas and Julie in the chapel where the former uses violence to remove Julie’s clothes convinced that “a little force would do the trick” (209) and after he hits Alison in hotel. Nicholas’s desire for violence blinds him to its danger on other free individuals. Wimmel is also reminiscent of De Deukans in the sense that both deny their anima in the same way Nicholas does. What Wimmel reinforces though is a narrative of power. This power is instilled in a will to control which Nicholas displays when he wants to control Julie and Alison. He slightly blames himself of the death of Alison when he confesses that he has imposed “the role I needed for Alison on her real self” (400).

With the final story, Conchis provides Nicholas with a story about freedom. He teaches him about “the moment when one stops living by the scripts” (“Narrative and Image in The Magus” 86). This story provides Nicholas with the right material to survive the trial. The aim of the trial is to pin Nicholas the way Clegg pins his butterflies. Conchis prepares a group of psychiatrists, doctors, and psychologists to analyze, publically, his personality. Julie steps out

of her role as his seducer and claims her mundane role. The disintoxication takes part before the trial, where Nicholas is made to watch her make love to Joe, the black man who plays the role of Jackal-headed god in Conchis's masque. Julie is no longer the perfect female model he fictionalizes and Nicholas is made to stand before a fantastic masked jury (the witch, Herne, the vampire, and succubus) and hear them pronounce cruel analysis of his character. They reduce him to a "diagram on a blackboard" (M 513) and later give him the right to give a call on sentencing the crucified Julie by raising or lowering his thumb. He refuses and acts the way Conchis does by choosing freedom from their and his own narrative. Instead of using the cat to flog Julie (for he is given the freedom to do so), Nicholas no longer feels the need to react to any discourse with violence and realizes the meaning of "*the better you understand freedom, the less you possess it*" (518). He drops his weapon having nothing to say. What replaces his power for narrative and fictionalization is the feeling to cry. Nicholas learns to be more compassionate and understands the danger of his games with women, the game of the "solitary heart" with his role as a "conjurer with his white rabbit" (21).

The disintoxication continues even after the trial. Although Conchis leaves the theatre, his last performance is staging his own death. At the same time Nicholas discovers Conchis's grave in Athens, he discovers that Alison is alive. The contrast is symbolic of the importance of the mundane over the fantastic, or the human over God. Nicholas is finally given his freedom to choose love over reason, to choose an authentic life over a dead myth. He realizes that Alison's "special genius, or uniqueness, was her normality, her reality, her predictability; her crystal core of non-betrayal; her attachment to all that [Julie] was not" (553).

There two problems with Fowles's conception of existential authenticity and the election of the Few. First, the character seems forced to choose rather than free to choose. Nicholas is like a prophet who is led by his own god, Conchis. Although the word hazard is said by Conchis several times and is supposed to be the reason why Nicholas is thrown into

their way, it rarely happens in that way, for everything in Nicholas's life is controlled by Conchis.<sup>6</sup> Although we know that Nicholas deserves his sentence, we cannot but feel that his imprisonment is crueler. Every existential individual has to find their own way with no help of a god and the discourse Fowles provides us with is contradictory to the existential one. The second problem is that Conchis's conception of freedom is not a Sartrean one. Although the choice he makes when he declines to kill the resistance fighters is an existential one, for it is beyond his own selfish will, the choice he imposes on Nick to choose Alison is not. Nicholas can finally see how Alison is superior to Julie, but we cannot help but believe that his conception is dictated and fake since, as readers, we cannot see Alison's main attraction.<sup>7</sup> We are also, like Nicholas, confused as what the masque and the trial aims at. Conchis leaves Nicholas and the reader with no meaning; Fowles's discourse, like Conchis's, is ontological rather than epistemological. The former contradicts his conception of good art.

In addition to that, freedom is not really the main theme. It is the search for the feminine principle and finding the psychological balance within the psyche that is the main theme of the novel. Carl Jung is more present than Sartre, for Conchis is a god and an expert in the field of psychiatry. What Nicholas learns then at the end of the godgame is that he should not inflict unnecessary pain; he does not achieve existential authenticity, yet he comes to learn what an inauthentic behavior is like. He also allows his feelings to surface. He manages to have asexual relations with women (Jojo and Kemp) and understands the freedom they possess. Most importantly, he matures and gives way to his feeling self.

The reason why *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the most acclaimed novel academically, in addition to its popularity, is Fowles' ability to weave themes of evolution, hazard, existentialism, and history in the most harmonious way where no theme is to oppose the other. The Victorian characters are torn to choose between convention and existential freedom without having any idea about the concept. Even though the narrator is from the

writer's time, he does not interfere in the characters' fate and allows them to speak their language and choose their ways. However, he does celebrate Sarah and Charles's (especially the latter) authentic choices. It is through these two characters, the only female mentor and her novice, that the reader has an accurate understanding of existential authenticity.

In this novel, Fowles tries to show characters embrace existential freedom "before it was chronologically possible" (W 18). The Victorian age coincides with the beginning of the rejection of God. The emergence of the works of Darwin and Nietzsche's conception of the 'death of God' had already pushed the intellectual elite into an edge of doubt. Charles, Sarah, and Dr Grogan are among this group. Yet Charles is only officially initiated when he meets the incarnation of the 'New Woman' in Sarah.

Sarah is as aloof as Conchis. She is also, like Conchis, ahead of her time. It is through her that we have an accurate example of a virtuous Sartrean existential choice. The narrator calls Sarah 'Tragedy' and Acheson believes that the nickname he gives her indicates her superiority. A tragic hero is superior to the other members of the society and the cause of that tragedy is usually, according to the definition of the concept, a miscalculation or a character flaw (Acheson 36). When she tells Charles her story on how she comes to be known as the 'French lieutenant's whore', she describes her former inauthentic self that judged people on the basis of what she reads in fiction. She misunderstands the intentions of Varguennes at first because she fails to understand the world outside that fiction. She also finds herself trapped as a governess to the Talbot family.

What makes Sarah authentic is not her social failure which she embraces bravely, for it is after all accidental and many women in the Victorian age suffered the same fate. It is her artistic one that makes her a uniquely modern character. She is a fictionalizer. Although she seems like a tragic heroine to Charles at first, and to her society, we later understand that she chooses to fake the ending of her story with Varguennes to seduce Charles and to gain

independence. She creates the most rejected label in her society to exile herself from it. By doing so, she rejects and annihilates all the principles of the Victorian society on purpose; she also provides herself with a life of an outcast. This allows her an unprecedented freedom that no other woman dares to embrace in her age, for she manages to recreate herself through her fictional story: “I think I have a freedom they cannot understand. No insult, no blame, can touch me. Because I have set myself beyond the pale. I am nothing, I am hardly human any more. I am the French Lieutenant’s Whore” (*FLW* 171). This also makes Sarah the first female magus in Fowles’s fiction. She creates an autobiographical text and casts Charles as a reader and a character. He is a character since he later fills the role of Varguennes when she meets him in Exeter.

Sarah’s text shares the ontology of Conchis’s. She tells Charles when he finally realizes that she lied to him about losing her virginity “not ask me to explain what I have done. I cannot explain it. It is not to be explained” (342) and she even goes so far as to declare that “I am not to be understood even by myself” (431). Charles’s confusion is also the reader’s and Sarah’s motives are unintelligible. One reading that is possible is that Sarah’s aim is to empower Charles and allows him more freedom to interpret her story. Empowering him would make her a favorite female seducer and eventually wins him over.

Sarah’s authenticity lies in her fearlessness independence and her capacity of being on her own. This feature is highly promoted by Fowles and French existentialists like Sartre and Camus. She is also described as being capable of reading people and Charles’s most “secret thought[s]” (342). She is constantly referred to in the novel by the terms ‘fallen’ and ‘falling’ which signifies ‘sinning’, so, in religious terms, it is a negative allusion; yet as we know the existential thought contradicts the Christian thought, which makes the terms rather positive in significance, for falling is freeing oneself from the restrictions of the ‘forbidden’. Sarah

continues to remake herself and ‘fall’ further when she joins the artistic group of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood.

Unlike Charles, Sarah is already recognized by the reader as a higher member of the Few. It is through Charles that we see a concrete development from the inauthentic, who is a potential Few, to the authentic Few. Thus, Sarah’s character, according to Loveday, does not develop which makes Charles, and mainly any member of the potential Few, superior in literary value to the reader, and “a character who develops will always steal the show from one (however splendid) who merely marks time, and in this case Sarah cannot hold the place of importance because she is merely the means. It is Charles who is the end” (Loveday 71). Thus, Sarah is a mere means to an end that is important to the existential development of Charles; this makes Charles the main protagonist, and since his development is generated by her, she is either the *princesse lointaine* who Charles later wins or his antagonist. The latter is what makes of Charles authentic. The first role corresponds to the second ending and the second to the third. Structurally speaking, the three endings represent Charles’s different choices in relation to his existential freedom.

Charles is also a potential tragic hero in the sense that he is also someone who is considered as superior to the other members of his society and possesses a fatal character flaw. He is an accomplished gentleman from a socially higher rank than that of Sarah. He belongs to the intellectual group that supports a Darwinist reading to evolution. He is not as conservative as his social group is. What makes his union with Sarah possible is this intellectual freedom that he shares with her and his fondness of mystery. His flaw is “laziness” which is seen by the narrator as a “distinguishing trait” of his (*FLW* 21). In viewing Charles as a tragic hero, it is necessary for the reader to see Sarah as an antagonist. She leads Charles towards his tragic ending which coincides with his existential one. Tragedy in the novel is highly associated with existential authenticity, for when both characters lose their place in society, they gain their

independence from it and eventually choose their own paths. This explains why Sarah does not choose Charles in the last ending. She uses Charles from the start to help her find the life she would flourish in. That life is not to be his wife as when she joins the great Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, she finds her true self which is unable to “love [Charles] as a wife must” (442).

Charles is unable to see Sarah for what she is until the end. The reader is more sympathetic towards Charles since the former knows that Charles is somehow blinded by a role he is playing, a “certain responsibility towards the less fit” (161). We realize that Sarah starts to become a great danger to Charles’s survival when we hear of the story of the hysterical Marie de Morell who ruins the life of Emile de La Roncière. Sarah is also referred to in several chapters as an Odyssean siren, Calypso, and the Sphinx which alerts both the reader and the ignorant Charles. With the given information, Charles starts to unconsciously realize that maybe what he sees in Sarah is a path for his own freedom. His superior position as a baron is his most comfortable choice which would guarantee his survival, the way his marriage with Ernestina does, but it would rid him of his own individualism. However, before the first ending suggested by the narrator, he chooses Ernestina to survive through joining her father’s progressive company. When Charles hears of his uncle’s marriage, he is forced to choose Ernestina as a wife to reside comfortably in a state of economic and cultural superiority. This makes one of the three endings of the novel.

The first ending occurs after Sarah and Charles’s consumption of love in Exeter. Charles walks away on Sarah realizing that choosing her would make him “one of life’s victims, one more ammonite caught in the vast movements of history, stranded now for eternity, a potential turned to a fossil” (321). Ernestina, on the other hand, would guarantee his survival. Charles’s development comes to an end, and he deals with his existential anguish by rejecting it altogether and embracing the familiar, which is convention. However, this ending is the most improbable among the three. The reason lies, first, in the narrator’s annihilation of

it in chapter 45. The first lines of the chapter explain: “I had better explain that although all I have described in the last two chapters happened, it did not happen quite in the way you may have been led to believe” (327). The narrator goes on to explain that Charles, like everyone, is allowed to imagine future scenarios of his life, and the first ending is one. Second, there are three pointers that suggest that the first ending is not plausible. The first is our knowledge of Ernestina having more than seven children in the future. The second is that Mrs Poulteney is denied entry to Heaven, which would suggest that Charles and the narrator believe in God; we also know it is wrong. The third is the tone in which the narrator tells the ending. Irony is the prevailing component in the narrative; we are told that Charles dies a decade after Ernestina and that he mourns her “earnestly” (325); the word is an anagram to her name and so it is an insincere aesthetic formation that we find amusing since we already know that Charles’s marriage to Ernestina is based on logical, economic, and cultural interests. Thus, the first ending portrays “a betrayal of Charles’s deeper potentiality” (327).

The two last endings start from similar chronological departures. Charles finally, through Sam’s anonymous guiding note, finds Sarah after months of research. The two endings follow his first existential awareness after rejecting the idea of marriage to Ernestina. While the first endings make of Sarah the tragic heroine, the last two prepare us to Charles’s fate. The third presents us with a tragic hero whose choice is a symbol of his own liberation.

What Charles experiences before deciding to leave Ernestina is his ability to choose; he hates it at first, since it presents him with an anguish that is rather unfamiliar and freedom that promises unlimited possibilities. Although “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” (328). Charles’s opportunity to battle his own laziness is now possible. He has to decide a future free from convention, to “uncrucify” himself (349). Charles starts a conversation with himself in

church after the Exeter scene. He is either to “stay in prison, what your time calls duty, honor, self-respect, and you are comfortably safe. Or you are free and crucified” (349). He finds the concept of crucifixion unsatisfactory; he then realizes that Christ is not supposed to be crucified, but rather uncrucified and free from all convention but the duty to be among the elect, the authentic, even if they are to end up as “fossils” (315). The realization serves as an illuminating hope and Charles sets himself upon the journey of finding his mentor, Sarah. Charles, according to Acheson, “has fashioned for himself what is in effect a religion of freedom”, for he lacks the existential conception of what he has experienced (Acheson 43). In spite of the restrictions of his age, he manages to take a step forward towards his goal. However, this does not mean that Charles’s new realization is unflawed.

What Charles fails to comprehend is that every plan he is forming is based on his relation to a savior who is Sarah. Acheson believes that the letter Charles writes to Sarah is inauthentic since it speaks of a religious discourse that he has annihilated. The letter says that what binds him with Sarah is a “strange fate” and that he mentions the strength of God’s will in reuniting them again together (*FLW* 356). Acheson believes that “God and fate can have no part in the personal philosophy of one who is existentially authentic, for they are means by which an individual avoids responsibility for his own actions” (Acheson 43). However, this cannot be true since the characters reside in the Victorian age, and even those who reject God speak in a vocabulary that is still religiously prevailing. Even the authentic Sarah uses the religious discourse, for it is the nineteenth century. Atheism is still new to its adherents; even the freest individuals have the religious concepts inherent in their linguistic jargon. Fowles is making sure that his representation of the Victorian atheist does not resemble that of the twentieth century.

What makes the letter inauthentic is not the religious jargon that Charles uses. It is the last note that Charles adds: “P.S. On re-reading what I have written I perceive a formality my

heart does not intend. Forgive it. You are both so close and yet a stranger—I know not how to phrase what I really feel. Your fondest C” (*FLW* 357). The ‘formality’ that we sense in Charles’s final version of his letter to Sarah is truly not intended, but he cannot help it since he does not know the real Sarah. Sarah to Charles is like Julie to Nicholas. She is the perfect mysterious prototype of all women, “the one Eve personified, all mystery and love and profundity” (410). This explains why the second ending, in which Charles ends up with Sarah married and having a daughter, renders Charles inauthentic.

Neither Charles nor Sarah is to have a tragic end in the second ending, yet both are to lose their freedom to one another. Acheson sees Sarah as authentic in the second ending since, even if the latter is a conventional ending, she confesses that she has planned her relation to Charles upon a falsehood. She also allows Charles some moments to himself to think whether she is worthy of his love or not (Acheson 45). However, we believe that both acted inauthentically since Sarah has not answered the advertisement and this act seems to put her in the place of the hysterical Marie de Morell again. Sarah’s motifs are not clear and so since she is presented as a mythical prototype (even by the writer and the narrator since the latter denies knowledge of her mind) of a woman, she does not materialize into a full individual the way Charles does throughout the novel. That is the reason why Loveday, as we have seen earlier, considers Charles to be the main hero of the novel.

In chapter 60, the narrator mentions an intervening God that helps Sarah and Charles meet; this is a clear pointer that this ending is not authentic since the narrator is very aware of the existential jargon and its relation to religion, for the narrator is, unlike Charles and Sarah, from the twentieth century. Thus, in chapter 61, which portrays the third ending, Sarah and Charles meet hazardously: “there is no intervening god beyond whatever can be seen” (*FLW* 445). It is in this chapter that Charles sees through Sarah’s nature and refuses a future with her. Although she rejects his marriage proposal, He is the one who decides that his freedom is

more precious than his dependence on her for a temporary phase of happiness and that the image of the Sphinx that Sarah embodies is but “one riddle” (445); life should be embraced with no attempt to unravel its mystery, but to be “endured” (445). Charles finally finds independence and “faith in himself” rather than in a different person. His freedom is finally celebrated and it is greater than any other character’s since it is a freedom that precedes its time.

We have already dealt with Williams in the way we have with Miranda in the second chapter. They both are potential Few but they fail to gain full membership. While Miranda fails because she dies and all she has are theoretical assumptions about a future existential life, Williams chooses a life of duty over that of freedom. Although this life is celebrated in *The Magus*, it is not in “The Ebony Tower”. The reason lies in Fowles’s belief that the artist, as we have explained in the first section of this chapter, relies on absolute freedom and a life of exile to create authentic art; that requires relinquishing his own moral responsibilities. This exception is made solely for artists. Nicholas has already failed as an artist and so his responsibility as a moral individual is more eminent.

*The Ebony Tower* is more concerned with what fiction is about rather than achieving individual freedom; actually, it is in this work that Fowles starts doubting whether existential freedom is possible at all; “I now think of existentialism as a kind of literary metaphor, a wish fulfillment. I long ago began to doubt whether it had any true philosophical value in many of its assertions about freedom” (qtd. in Bigsby 117). The work is more concerned with the difference between fiction and reality. The doubt that Fowles starts to imply in his fiction is about the possibility of absolute freedom and its function according to every person’s individual interests in life. While Nicholas has to learn to be dutiful, Charles has to free himself from duty. Miranda’s freedom is denied by hazard and Williams’s choice is unfairly frowned upon by Fowles himself. Sarah is forgiven for choosing her freedom over her love for

Charles while Nicholas is not. All these possibilities are contradictory. However, the most important issue here is finding meaning. Nicholas seems to fail since the end, together with Conchis's theatre, is rather ontological than epistemological. There is no meaning; his growth is more like a traumatic response than an understanding of his true self. Even Charles chooses an unknown path; his freedom is first based on his interest in Sarah, and the last ending is based on her rejection of him. This implication of meaninglessness indicates a favor of absurdism to existentialism. Fowles falls in the trap of postmodern representational art which he theorizes against in his *The Aristos*. The main question is: does that make his art less authentic? This is to be answered in the next section.

### 3.3. Fowlesian Ideas of Power Going Wrong: Didacticism versus Character Freedom

In this section, we will analyze the effect of Fowlesian philosophical ideas on his characters' freedom. Authorial authenticity has always celebrated character freedom in the sense that the author must free his characters from his authorial control. The result of such a technique is to create different sets of characters in every novel. The aim behind this creation is communication with readers from every time and place in the universe. Fowles believes that good art is timeless; this means that good art cannot be categorized into modernist or postmodernist fiction. He also believes, as we have analyzed in the second section of the first chapter, that a good artist has to defy the 'nemo' in order to create a timeless and authentic art.

The nemo is a philosophical concept that Fowles celebrates in his *The Aristos*. Its meaning is close to Sartre's existential angst, for it is the result of "a supreme form of anguish" (A 47). Defying the nemo is embracing one's complete freedom; however, most people tend to go the other way, which is easier. That way offers the opportunity to belong. The feeling to belong and to have a home, even in an undesirable society, is not simply a need; it is an unconscious desire since its aim is security. According to Fowles, the nemo defines an unconscious state of "nobodiness" that is considered to be a fourth element of the psyche, in

addition to the ego, super-ego, and id. The nemo is then inherent in every human, for it “is a specifically human psychic force; a function of civilization, of communication, of the uniquely human ability to compare and hypothesize” (48). This force is a negative one though, since it reminds the civilized being of his own insignificant value in the world. The human being is thus in a constant clash with his nemo. Fowles believes that there are two apparent ways of defying the nemo. The first is to join the herd and belong as a ‘somebody’ instead of a ‘nobody’; Fowles sees this method as inauthentic since the individual chooses to wear a symbolic uniform that “puts a man in a situation where part of the blame for failure can always be put on the group” (50). The second way is to gain one’s independence by standing out, by becoming “the bohemian, the dandy, the outsider, the hippy” (50).

In the contemporary modern art of the 60’s, the second way is the favorite one. The artist is almost obsessed with finding this new and unique way of representation that guarantees his art’s survival. Artists merge “exoticism of representation with banality of theme” (50). According to Fowles, surviving time, or defying the state of nobodiness, cannot be achieved by reacting to the nemo in any of the former ways. The answer to creating a great work of art is to embrace the nemo. The timelessness of a work of art is the reason for its greatness, the reason for its resistance to academic categorization and collecting. Art cannot be collected, for it belongs to all humans through time since it communicates the same principles of humanity. It is only in a great work of art that we find a coherence of theme and form. This is the main reason why Fowles defends an epistemological, rather than an ontological, aim in his works. Choosing existentialism as a main theme lies in the writer’s attempt to defy his own nemo. His works, as we have already discussed in former sections, fail to do so, for most of his characters find no meaning at the end and what remains is a labyrinth of aimless abstractions.<sup>8</sup>

Fowles is a collector of women. This has been confirmed in the last section of the second chapter. His female characters are a prototype of the *princesse lointaine*. They are distant, unattainable, inarticulate, and ready objects for art assimilation. Fowles uses his female characters in the same way his male characters do. They serve as sources of creative power to the male artists in his novels. Even in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where he chooses Sarah to be the first female magus, Fowles makes of Sarah a tool for the narrator and Rossetti. Sarah's sense of uniqueness is not experienced by the reader who sees her as an element of timeless beauty. Cooper finds that the female characters' individuality "suppressed through the generalization of her identity within a narrative that usually, like the collector's, relates ambiguously to change and evinces a nostalgia for mythic and timeless" (Cooper 35). As we have concluded before, this representation costs Fowles an important aspect of authentic artistic creation, which is embracing his own anima. His aim behind romanticizing women is to prioritize them over men, as he sees "man as a kind of artifice, and woman as a kind of reality. The one is cold idea, the other is warm fact" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 59). The result of that defectively implemented prioritization is the prevalence of 'cold ideas' rather than 'warm facts'. This is one thematic aspect in Fowles's novels. Many male authors of the 50's and the 60's struggle for a fairly accurate representation of independent female characters since feminist studies had just emerged at that time. However, even this thematic failure is redeemed in terms of structure. This argument is to be expanded in the last chapter where we are to read Fowles's fiction from another structural perspective.

Fowles's conception of an existentialist novelist is a novelist who is able to create independent relatable characters that are free from the author's control. A great writer is also a great story teller. Fowles's skills at story telling suffer no shortcomings, yet his capacity to free his characters is somehow lacking. He believes that an authentic writer should avoid being didactic. Although existentialism is the underlying philosophy in his novels, he makes

little use of its vocabulary. The most successful example is *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. *The Collector* and *The Magus*, however, display the author's urge to control the text through instructing his magus figures. Fowles's inspirational source is the type of author who allows their characters to act freely and even disobey their author's will. He speaks in an interview about one author in particular: "a very existentialist novelist ... is Jane Austen. Most of the time she was writing about a moral tradition, attempting to establish what authenticity was in her particular world and circumstances" (7-8). That means that implementing existential vocabulary is harmful to the text. Austen teaches her readers by freeing her characters while Fowles teaches them by forcing them to accept a moral conception of authenticity that the reader is somehow confused about. The confusion lies in the main protagonists' attitudes to their mentors and authors' instructions which are the same in all his fiction. The variety of theme is not abundant and the novels Fowles writes instruct in the same way the same stubborn protagonist.

The authenticity of the author lies also in portraying the timeless human condition, something which Fowles believes Marie de France and Jane Austen have been capable of. In his collection of short stories, *The Ebony Tower*, Fowles writes that Marie "did for her posterity something of what Jane Austen did for hers – that is, she set a new standard for accuracy over human emotion and their absurdities" (120). In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles comments on the character's independence and the author's responsibility towards decategorizing his characters by stating 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" (98). Categorizing one's characters is to disregard their individuality, their ability to timelessly exist in the reader's world. The author, as the quote suggests, is the planner of his novels, yet the act of planning should come as naturally implicit. Fowles's didacticism is explicitly conveyed through his mentors who serve as author surrogates to his main

protagonists. The didacticism goes so far as to form an elitist view of the politics of human relations. A great example of that is Fowles's first novel, *The Collector*.

The aim of Fowles in being didactic comes from a fear to glamorize the inarticulate hero. This idea is mainly influenced by the Cambridge academic, F. R. Leavis. The latter argues, in his *The Great Tradition* (1946), that the aim of the novel is to teach the reader how to live his life. He finds novels of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, Henry James, and Joseph Conrad the best exemplars for that. The reason lies in their skill, as novelists, to implicitly teach through their characters the meaning of life. Writers like Fowles, Iris Murdoch, and A. S. Byatt try to recreate that tradition which Leavis calls 'great' by creating characters who are rather obsessed with finding meaning. The obsession is usually the writer's, since he/she are working under the shadow of their predecessors, and so the writer's obsession is the same as the characters'. In contrast, what makes writers like George Eliot great is their skill to create a new world in each novel where characters behave differently from characters in a formerly created world. Didacticism is a result of a harmonious balance in character creation and thematic purpose.

Another reason for Fowles's didacticism is his fondness of philosophy. He announced once in one of his interviews that he wanted to be a poet first and a philosopher second. Like Nicholas Urfe, he failed in becoming a poet, and his philosophy has been described as quite deductive since it rewrites already existing existential concepts. His fiction is his best creation. His first aim behind his writing is to change the society he lived in. He also claims that he is a socialist. However, Fowles's didacticism takes an extreme political turn which goes against the basic principles of socialism. His conception of the Few and the Many has brought him a timeless accusation of elitism. In *The Collector*, Fowles's thematic failing does not lie in didacticism only; it lies in Miranda's, and G.P.'s, elitist views about the superiority of one social group over the other.

Miranda looks down at Clegg to the point of assigning him a title of ‘Caliban’. Clegg belongs to the new class of wealthy people in England of the 60’s whose efforts at impressing tasteful people like Miranda (by buying her expensive gifts) do them wrong. Clegg, in spite of his efforts, does not change culturally and his lower class values prevail; he keeps on buying worthless books and works of art that are “nearly fifty pounds’ worth” (C 125). Fowles’s main failing is not in Miranda thinking that she is superior to Clegg, for it can be deduced by the reader quite easily if Miranda does not align and categorize Clegg to a greater social group of the Many, or as she conceptualizes it the ‘New People’. Miranda announces that she is “so superior to him. I know this sounds wickedly conceited. But I *am*. And so it’s Ladymont and Boadicea and *noblesse oblige* all over again. I feel I’ve got to show him how decent human beings live and behave” (137). The reader would have to excuse Miranda’s anger at this point since she is after all imprisoned brutally by Clegg. The unusual shift of sympathy of the reader takes place when Miranda accuses a social group of new money whose unintelligence and lack of taste make them despised: “I hate what G.P. calls the New People, the new class people with their cars and their money and their tellies and their stupid vulgarities and their stupid crawling imitation of the bourgeoisie” (221). Fowles finds it surprising that many of his readers feel more sympathy towards Clegg than Miranda. He writes in the preface of *The Aristos* his aim in portraying his “misunderstood” ideology in the book (A 9). The explanation he offers is a form of writing back to the critical views that see Miranda’s views as discriminatory towards an important rising class in Britain. His explanation of his aim behind the representational allegory of the Many and the Few has offered but little change in the readers’ sympathy towards Miranda, as we can see in the following quote:

Clegg, the kidnapper, committed the evil; but I tried to show that his evil was largely, perhaps wholly, the result of a bad education, a mean environment, being orphaned: all factors over which he had no control. In short, I tried to

establish the virtual innocence of the Many. Miranda, the girl he imprisoned, had very little more control than Clegg over what she was: she had well-to-do parents, good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it—she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist snob, like so many university students. Yet if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately needs. (10)

What an academic reader is aware of is that Miranda's elitism (which is G.P.'s) is actually Fowles', so her 'snobbish' ideas about how "the ordinary man is the curse of civilization" (C 134) have already been pronounced by Fowles in one of his interviews when he said the exact same thing: "I'm against the glamorization of the Many. I think the common man is the curse of civilization, not its crowning glory" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 1). Another fault in Fowles's representation of the Many is the source of their inferiority. Fowles seems to be contradicting himself here when he says that the Many are virtually innocent. In existentialist thought, any man, no matter where he comes from, is free to be whoever he wants. The social, economic, cultural, psychological backgrounds are irrelevant and uncontrolling to one's capacity to be free. Because Miranda's theory lacks a good underlying argument, the reader does not associate Clegg's persona with any social group. Clegg is rather seen as having pathological drives rather than defining features of the lower middle class. Thus, Fowles's aim seems to, as Loveday argues, defend "the intriguing, but entirely unproven and potentially highly offensive, hypothesis that there is a link between the individual psychology and the class mannerisms, between the psychopathic sadism of Clegg (for such it is) and the values of the lower middle class" (23). Clegg's sadistic actions, as we have seen in the former chapter, are not the result of his social background; they stem from a schizophrenic disorder and elements of transference, denial, and repression. His character is extreme. Other

members of the Many in Fowles's novels do not share Clegg's edginess. Sam and Mary in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* belong to a lower class, yet they are intelligent individuals that do not lack empathy. Sam goes so far as to redeem his former actions towards his master by sending him Sarah's address at the end of the novel. This is one of the reasons why the latter is more successful than *The Collector*.

After this fair charge of elitism, Fowles declared that his objective was to bring about a society where the Many and the Few can live harmoniously when the Few takes the responsibility to educate the Many out of their ignorance. In *The Collector*, Fowles attempts to bring that society about even if he fails: "we must create a society in which the Many will allow the Few to live authentically, and to teach and help the Many themselves to begin to do so as well" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 8). Miranda, instead of taking that responsibility seriously, keeps on looking down on Clegg's ways; her, ironically, unintelligent ways brought her to her end. Instead of playing the role of a teacher, Miranda takes up the role of Prospero and assigns Clegg the inferior role of Caliban. She keeps correcting Clegg's English and criticizing his outrageous taste in painting and books.

The moral inadequacy of the allegory of the Many and the Few is that it is impossible to sentence Clegg here for his actions since he can hardly be responsible for them; Clegg is after all, according to Fowles, socially conditioned to act in this inferior way. Fowles is denying him even the simplest of the social moral values that can save him from being a murderer. Fowles believes that only the elite, the highly intelligent, can manage to grow human empathy. It is Miranda's, and thus Fowles's, misunderstanding of Clegg that makes her less sympathetic than him. Miranda falls victim of Fowles's didacticism. If, as readers, we have known less of Miranda, we would have had more sympathy. Her diary is full of didactic passages and is, accordingly, "an embarrassment" (Loveday 18). Even her existential journey is not credible, since she is rather pushed by the writer to remember existential

pronouncements of G.P. What dooms Miranda redeems Clegg. Clegg's fascinating character is the result of his absolute freedom from the author. Most critics, among them Acheson and Loveday, agree that Fowles accomplishes "a superb job of revealing the horrors of his twisted mind" (Acheson 7). Loveday believes that Clegg's triggers the interest of the reader from the very start of the novel; his language creates, in the mind of the reader, "a combination of attraction to and repulsion from the character, of admiration and contempt, which gives the book its curious and distinctive flavour" (13). Clegg is the character that is the most independent in all of Fowles's novels. He is the only one who escapes the same pattern of the potentially elected prototype. The other inauthentic characters do not play the role of the protagonist the way Clegg does and so their independence is not as concrete as Clegg's. Clegg, unlike Miranda, possesses a psychological credibility which redeems Fowles of his omnipotence as a god-like author.

Fowles's didacticism in *The Collector* does not only cost him the freedom of his potential Few; he also reduces his democratic socialism to a form of an elitist political discourse. Loveday dedicates a whole chapter in his *The Romances of John Fowles* about Fowles's failure in creating the right thematic principles of democratic socialism. The first principle prioritizes equality between all men who stem from all classes. Humans should be looked at "*from the point of view of their common humanity* [and] this common element outweighs the factors that separate and rank them" (130). The second indicates the priority of man as primarily a sociable being "in much the same absolutely fundamental way that he is air-breathing" (130). This means that man is not conditioned by his class as much as he is conditioned by his social relations with humans from different social groups. This also means that man should not isolate himself from society and should rather be an active member. The third principle relies on the two former since it concerns social change. This allows different social groups to interact and find a common ground for an equal state of selfhood. Fowles's

conception of the Many and the Few state the contrary. His ideology further separates individuals into different and binary social groups that further distance them than bring them close to each other's humaneness.

Another contradictory theme to these principles is the domaine. Although Fowles expresses an interest in the democratic socialism of George Orwell and R. H. Tawney, his fondness of isolating his protagonists in a distant natural world makes him anti-social. This further extenuates class system binaries and directly contradicts the second principle which indicates the importance of humans as necessarily social beings. Fowles goes far in his elitism when he announces that what truly separates humans is not social as much as it is biological: "unless the Many can be educated out of their false assumption of inferiority and the Few out of their equally false assumption that biological superiority is a state of existence instead of what it really is, a state of responsibility—then we shall never arrive at a more just and happier world" (A 10). Whether he assigns a 'responsibility' to the Few or not, it does not make of the social relation between them equal. The Many are made ignorant and inferior while the Few are intelligent and superior. This superiority allows exploitation of the Many in the absence of morality and the argument that the Few are necessarily moral is invalid since Fowles's protagonists (the Few and the potential Few) are mostly selfish and too aware of their own superiority. Nicholas has exploited most of the women he encountered in his life; Miranda's sense of superiority blinds her to see through Clegg's impotence; even the most sympathetic, Charles, teases the fragile Sam about his lower class accent which adds up to Sam's sense of inferiority. The latter acts vengefully when he plots against his master and decides not to take the letter to Sarah. The only recognition of a member of the Few about their own lack of responsibility comes from the narrator of "Poor Koko". The narrator realizes that the burglar is smarter than he has expected and that his own sense of superiority is what costs him his loss, the inexplicable burning of a book he has dedicated a lifetime for. This realization is not

simply the narrator's only; it is also Fowles's. Fowles questions many of his former ideologies in his collection of short stories. His skeptical treatment, as we will come to see later, is what makes his collection less didactic and heavily aesthetic.

Fowles's potential Few are mostly men who are English and feel that they are born in a special social and biological state that separates them from their fellow humans. Their special existence allows a special journey and so they are taken away to distant natural settings to meet a special mentor and a special woman who is going to help them mature. Thus, social change does not occur. What occurs instead is personal change. The failure here lies in Fowles's socialism and so in his elitist conception of society and social members, but if we are to ignore this thematic aspect and focus on personal change, which is maybe more important to Fowles (since the change of the individual would necessarily lead to a change of society), are we to detect a success?

The contradiction does not lie in Fowles' socialism only. It lies also in his existentialist aim of bringing his characters into an awareness of some meaning in life. Fowles's conception of the Many and the Few are contradictory to the principles of existential freedom, for free individuals are free because there is no social background that holds them back. However, if we are to ignore this ideological defect and focus on the meaning that his characters find, we are to be disappointed in the same way. No character, except for Charles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, is equipped with some knowledge about how to live their lives properly. All that we get from reading the novels is didactic theory from mentors. The didacticism indicates an existential aim behind the novels, yet character development is mostly static. Miranda informs an understanding of G.P.'s philosophy, yet she is imprisoned and the ending is rather ontological, for the question of how she should live her life is left unanswered. In *The Magus*, it is even worse. The novel is heavily structured with metafictional devices and the questions asked are never truly answered; Conchis tells Nicholas stories about the

importance of freedom, yet he does not allow him to choose for himself. The latter is terrorized into accepting the path designed by Conchis and Fowles. That path is full of obscurities, as we have seen in the second section of this chapter.

*The Magus* is Fowles's most complex novel; it is complex in the sense that plot and theme seem to run into contradictory ends. Although Nicholas is led to learn about authenticity and freedom, his final attitudes towards Alison show the contrary. At the end of the novel, he violently slaps her on the face; he describes her as a "priestess from the Temple of Demeter" (*M* 650), indicating that he is seeing her the way he sees Julie. The problem here is not with Nicholas as much as it is with Fowles. It is Fowles, the collector of women, who is in control of the text. Although formerly he is controlling it through Conchis, in the absence of the meta-theatre Fowles takes the lead. Nicholas is tossed to and fro by both gods, the god of the text, Fowles, and his surrogate, the god of the meta-theatre. His freedom is thus condemned. This failure of growth is also shown in Nicholas's admiration of Julie's older version, Lily de Seitas; Nicholas seems to be fed by her words of wisdom when she tells him that Alison is an exceptional woman. The reader is confused as why Conchis and de Seitas are insisting on promoting Alison because she is another prototype of the Fowlesian female character. The reason lies in Nicholas being a puppet character controlled by his author. The novel ends with Nicholas having no real understanding of life, in spite of the didactic heaviness of Conchis's stories. The contradiction is even dictated by the ontological dictum "an answer is always a form of death" (628), so while the stories told by Conchis construct a certain meaning, the lessons learned are supposed to reject and suspect it. The postmodernist and absurdist reading of the novel are more appropriate than Fowles's conception of good art and how to rightfully defy the nemo, for his novels aim at no epistemological end. It is Cooper who puts it best when she states the following:

If the novel first invites us to join Nick on a journey towards self-realization and then retracts that invitation by forcing us to question both the hero's ability to arrive at that destination and the very idea of destination itself, then we must also question what *The Magus* is saying about those large issues with which it engages: art, ethics, sexuality, and textuality. In the exploration of these issues, the novel discloses its subtle refusals to commit itself to its own premises. (79)

The most important premise is Nicholas's freedom of choice. Freedom is prioritized in the plot to the point where Fowles entitles only the chapter that deals with it. All other chapters are not entitled. This structural prioritization is not supported on the thematic level since Alison is rather forced abruptly: "I also knew it was all bound up with Alison, with choosing Alison, and having to go on choosing her every day" (*M* 641). What is, in reality, emphasized is the power of the godgame, Conchis's and Fowles's. Another indicator of the omnipotence and sadomasochism of Conchis, and eventually Fowles – since he speaks for Conchis – is the use of quotes of de Sade as epigraphs of the three sections of the book (Cooper 80). Fowles admits to having to decide on behalf of his characters when he told James Campbell: "I do try to give them freedom, yes, but only as a game, because pretending your characters are free can only be a game. The reality of the situation is that you're sitting with a pencil and at any point you like you can strike out developments in the book" (*Conversations with John Fowles* 33). The game is thus not just Conchis's and Nicholas is not free; he is part of that game and his choices are bound to the choices of the godgame. The only freedom there is in the novel is the freedom exercised by the author and his surrogates. Their moral principles remain didactic and unachievable since they are undercut by his omnipotent powers as an author.

Even the ending of the novel is deconstructive. The author refuses to offer the reader complete certainty about their union. The last paragraph is written in a frozen present tense. The moral didacticism that the book densely discusses is deteriorated by this uncertainty and

we are left to believe that maybe Nicholas has learned nothing. Ontology is again prevailing while the so promoted epistemology, which requires the protagonist to find meaning, is undercut. *The Magus* offers no meaning; this contradicts Fowles's conception of good art and existentialism, but even this would not have harmed the book's balance. While *The Collector* celebrates the freedom of Clegg, *The Magus* suffers the didacticism of both Conchis and Fowles. Nicholas, like Miranda, suffers a more dangerous type of imprisonment, which is an aesthetic one.

The most successful creation of Fowles is *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Its themes about evolution, hazard, and freedom go smoothly well with its plot and structure. The only victim is Sarah; however, like most Fowlesian women, her lack of freedom is expected, even if at the start we have hopes, for she possesses artistic skills and a will for independence that no other heroine of Fowles displays before. Her stories resemble those of Conchis in their complex nature, for she tells Charles to not ask her to explain; she claims that she does not understand her own motifs sometimes. However, her skill as a story teller is not as powerful as Conchis's in the sense that he remains a creator while Sarah's role is redefined at the end of the novel the way it is questioned in the middle. She joins an artistic milieu where she acts like a model for other male creators. In the middle of the novel, her power is interrupted by the narrator's claim that she is fictional.

Charles, on the other hand, is the freest character. Fowles uses the narrator as a surrogate instead of his male protagonist. He is not absolutely free since he still meets the requirement of the potential Few, yet he possesses a relative freedom that is refreshingly satisfactory. Charles shares no artistic powers with other Fowlesian protagonists and he is the least selfish and condescending. He is an amateur collector of fossils and his state as a gentleman is reflective of his idle character. His freedom is supported by the narrative by allowing him to choose for himself depending on his existential growth. The first ending

declares him inauthentic since he chooses to join Mr. Freeman in his corporation and accordingly marry his daughter. The second and the third stem from more freedom and an understanding of his true self. Charles, unlike the other characters, finds his true self even if it does not guarantee his survival as we have seen in the first section. He is the only character who finds meaning and this allows the novel to compose a balance of meaning and play that is quite depriving in the other novels. Fowles's conception of the nemo is met successfully in *The French lieutenant's Woman*. An emphasis on form will be further discussed to reaffirm this argument and to analyze the function of the metafictional device in promoting the theme of existentialism.

Another thematic flaw in the novel which the collection of short stories avoids is congratulating Sam for his choice to join Mr. Freeman and Charles for his choice to leave it. This further stresses Fowles's elitist views on the Many. Sam, a member of the Many, is thought of as unworthy to refuse Mr. Freeman's choice and barge into a journey of his own. In *The Ebony Tower*, the act of condescendence does not only lead the narrator of "Poor Koko" to lose his book; it also makes him question whether his conception of the Many is fair, for the burglar shows awareness of human relations and needs that the narrator lacks. Fowles might have recognized the value of social intelligence that his members of the Few lack.

What makes *The Ebony Tower* different from Fowles's other novels is its main thematic shift. This thematic shift affects the techniques that Fowles uses in the narrative. The title that has been chosen by the author at first is "*Variations*" on "themes of previous books of mine and in methods of narrative presentation" (ET 117). Fowles's editor asked the author to change the title since the allusion to its significance remains in the author's "very private mirage" of a mind (117). The alternative title is, according to Vipond, also "a variation on the term 'ivory tower', used in a poem by Sainte-Beuve to describe the romantic poet Alfred de Vigny's withdrawal from the world to a '*tour d'ivoire*' of introspection, in contrast with the

more socially engaged Victor Hugo” (“*The Ebony Tower* and the Search for Meaning” 132). Henry Breasley, in the first short story that is entitled “The Ebony Tower”, uses the variant term to describe artists who are afraid “to be clear” (*ET* 50). What we are familiar with as readers is that Fowles speaks for Breasley, the selected mentor. And since Fowles is against the principles that Breasley rejects, among them this fear, we would imagine that Fowles’s choice of the title is ironic. However, it is not the case. The collection is about ‘what fiction is about’ and apparently even Fowles is discovering the answer to this dilemma. The complexity of life is met with in his short stories, for Fowles is no longer concerned with finding meaning as much as he is concerned with ways to create mirrored versions of this meaningless world. Most of his characters in this collection either fail in finding meaning or choose not to find it in the first place. “The Cloud”, Fowles’s final story, embodies the postmodern ontological view of life and fiction where it is impossible to interpret Catherine’s fate at the end of the novel. Fowles comes to challenge all his epistemological notions of life and fiction. His characters follow his lead, for they reject finding meaning and embrace the complexity of life the way the reader should.

In “Enigma”, Fowles complicates the narrative by making his story resemble a detective form where Marcus Fielding disappears. The detective assigned as a protagonist to the story guides the reader in the same traditional way the detective story reader is guided until he meets Isobel Dodgson, the son’s girlfriend. The story is interrupted by Isobel’s existential interpretation of the disappearance of Fielding. However, she does not claim to know what happened to him and asserts that her interpretation is but one possibility amongst many. The disappearance remains a mystery and the detective closes the case after searching the lake which is fictionalized into the suicide’s setting for Isobel’s story. Fowles breaks up with the conventions of the detective story to highlight the point that fiction is not about finding answers; it is to embrace what he refers to as “the general mystery in cosmic” (*Conversations*

with *John Fowles* 163). In short, what Fowles aims to convey is that artistic clarity is not consistent with life. The existential explanation that is offered is but one possible way to interpret the world and it is rather fictional; this reinforces the fictionality of the paths taken by his other characters. The world is more complex than existentialism.

Fowles does not only break up with former traditions of representation here. He breaks up with his own philosophical assumptions about the Many and the Few and existentialism. His characters take on a more ontological view of the world where answers are neither asked nor answered. Didacticism is scarce and so the narrative styles itself with unforced themes of absurdism that make his fiction a coherently aesthetic whole. The beauty of “The Enigma” lies in leaving the question in the epigraph, “who can become muddy and yet, settling, slowly becomes limpid?” (*ET* 185), unanswered, for no one becomes ‘limpid’. Ontology outweighs epistemology and this contradicts Fowles’s conception of good art. However, his art comes as more aesthetically gratifying than when he forces his epistemological ideas into his fiction. The other stories follow the same aesthetic principle. “The Cloud” does not answer the disappearance of Catherine. We cannot know whether she commits suicide or simply disconnect from the group because of her melancholy. Her behavior is arbitrary and unpredictable. Her sexual relation with Peter, her moral enemy, shows that she has reached a stage of carelessness that is representative of an absurdist state. In “Poor Koko”, Fowles focuses on miscommunication between the Few and the Many instead of focusing on the superiority of the Few over the Many. Thus, the potential Few is not celebrated. The narrator declares at last: “my sin was not primarily that I was middle-class, intellectual, that I may have appeared more comfortably off financially than I am in fact; but that I live by words” (182). His linguistic skill at communicating ideas as a writer fails him socially. Fowles portrays a failure of his own generation of articulate individuals to communicate with the upcoming verbally unequipped Marxist generation. The title of the story is explained by the narrator

when he informs us that “it is a Japanese word and means correct filial behaviour, the proper attitude of son to father” (182). This miscommunication is part of fiction’s complexity on its own and on its relation to life.

Fowles might not have committed to his mission of teaching the reader about how to live, but this failure is in itself a success. His aim of being “a sound philosopher than a good novelist” (*Conversations with John Fowles* 135) has been reconsidered by himself, for he said in one of his interviews that he is not “an existentialist in the social sense [or] the cultural sense. I am really much more interested, in terms of the modern novel, in what fiction is about” (174). Fowles starts doubting the existentialist ideology and the possibility of its practicality by the time he starts writing his late works. The doubt might have been deduced from the didactic weight his novels carry other than Fowles’s growing skeptical view of the philosophy. Whether it is the case or not, this skepticism has brought a balance to his fiction that his first two novels lack. As a result, absurdism, rather than existentialism, has proved to be more aesthetically superior since it requires more freedom of character. No wonder then that Fowles’s most authentic characters, aesthetically speaking, are his most inauthentic characters, existentially speaking.

### Conclusion

Fowlesian rewriting of existential freedom has rendered his fiction more authentic. Fowles’s characters choose different paths towards their freedom. Some of these ways are even found contradictory to it by the founder of existentialism, Jean Paul Sartre. Linking hazard and evolution to existential freedom is a challenge that has been fictionally successful. They both share an unconventionality that does not run against the ‘death of God’ and so their embrace is an embrace of the complexity of the mystery of the world that is the generating power of freedom. The third means to existential freedom, the *domaine*, should be temporary, for its permanence indicates the individual’s detachment from reality. Its aim is to teach the

initiate, through his isolation, about himself and his real role in the real universe. It allows an absolute freedom that promotes a need for the mundane over the fantastic.

Existential freedom is more successfully tackled in Fowles's fiction than his conception of existential authenticity. What most of his characters attain is freedom, yet that freedom provides no epistemological end. Nicholas is forced to choose a love that he does not freely approve of; Charles is free in the last ending, yet the product of that freedom is unknown. Unlike Nicholas, Sarah is celebrated for choosing freedom over love. The contradiction asserts that Fowles's fiction, in spite of the guidance he offers through his mentors, promotes absurdism rather than existentialism. The end does not lie in the meaning of the journey taken by the characters but rather in freedom alone. Thus, Fowles's didacticism about the Few and the Many is faultily forced on a narrative that does not support it. As a result, his members of the Few do not enjoy one type of freedom, which is the most important; that freedom is freedom from the author. The only free characters are the ones who are inauthentic, with the exception of Charles, since maybe the fact he resides in a Victorian era makes him necessarily unaware of the existential ideology. Clegg is an authentically successful aesthetic embodiment of evil in the modern sense. Although he is made inferior by Fowles's elitist discrimination of his group to that of Miranda, he is the reason for the novel's overall artistic balance. Fowles's late relinquishing of existentialism and his elitist philosophy of the Many and the Few in his collection of short stories endorse a new aesthetic persona that relieves his fiction from the burden of didacticism and so his new skeptical approach towards fiction and life has proven to be more aesthetically appealing. However, it is important to analyze his techniques of the playful to see if our assumptions about his thematic implementation are rightfully judged.

## Notes

1. Didacticism will be further discussed in the last section of this chapter. Fowles's mentors seem to be controlled by Fowles's himself which gives his fiction a character that lacks openness.
2. Charles Darwin opposes Spencer's social conception of Darwinism which proves that he does not see evolution as vertical but rather horizontal.
3. The discussion of Sarah's inferior role as an object of art is further analyzed in the former chapter.
4. The concept 'domaine' is not mentioned in *The Aristos*, yet it is dealt with as 'Garden of Eden'.
5. Fowles uses the metaphor of Robin Hood in his "On being English but not British" published in 1964.
6. We shall come back to this point in the next section where we can judge the powerful ideas implemented by Fowles in his fiction and their effect on the freedom of his characters.
7. We have already dealt with how Alison is represented by the author in the second chapter. She is another version of the *princesse lointaine* whose main attraction is her aloofness and sexuality.
8. In this section, we deal with the ideology that Fowles implements in his novels and how the author's didacticism affects the freedom of his characters. The writer's obsession with the form and its relation to theme is to be further focused on in the last chapter where we are to judge the author's way of defying the nemo using the second way.

## **Chapter Four:**

Authenticating the Novel and Embracing Postmodern

Ontology

## Introduction

Fowles's aim is to explore existential freedom through his main protagonists. This question has been the main purpose in his creative writing. This purpose has categorized him as a romancer, a label that he does not find appealing at first, since he finds in realism a rather superior genre. However, he comes to accept it and celebrate it later when he adds his translated version to the Celtic story, "Eliduc", to his collection of short stories. Fowles finds in medieval romance the most appropriate genre to promote his existential and elitist ideology, yet, as we have found out in the former chapter, Fowles ends up embodying the absurd. This contradiction adds an important question to our research: is Fowles's use of romance faithful or subverted? And if subverted, what are the reasons for this subversion?

Fowles's use of parody categorizes him as a postmodernist by many critics. Among the outcomes of the label are the use of the literary devices of narrative unreliability, metafiction, and using multiple endings. Fowles exhausts parody to draw the reader's attention to the conscious constructedness of his fictional worlds which aims at devaluing the writer's role and upgrading that of the reader and the character. Through our former analysis of character freedom, this aim holds another contradiction, for Fowles's main characters are less free than he intends them to be. This contradiction is to be examined, along with other reasons for exhausting parody, in the second section.

The last section studies Fowles's use of intertextuality, which encompasses the use of literary allusions and several literary subgenres. While the first section focuses on romance, the last investigates Fowles's reasons for imitating other literary styles, which may or may not serve as a guide for interpreting the text to the reader.

#### 4.1. Parodying Romance versus Authenticating the Novel

Fowles's most celebrated themes are at odds with the narrative structure that is explicitly, rather than implicitly, promoted. We are using the word 'implicitly' because Fowles is too careful to be identified as a writer of romance. The reasons, which we will come to deal with at the end of the section, are many. Instead, Fowles finds in realism a superior literary genre that flatters his ambition of being the philosopher and the social activist that he wished to be. He believes that the best novelists are those who teach. This is the main aim behind the novel. While, as E. M. Forster argues, the novel "tells a story" (49), it is one that prioritizes plausibility; the writer must "be appealing to our intelligence and imagination, not merely to our curiosity" (50). The purpose of the novel is not the story itself; the story is a means towards a greater mission of reformation of the individual and society. Romance, on the other hand, is nothing but story; "narrative, folklore, myth – these are its very essence" (Loveday 8). While the novel has to act apologetically for its coincidences, its intricate plot, and its overall technical implications to avoid the lack of plausibility (Loveday 8), romance celebrates them for an opposite purpose which is escaping reality.

The critic Simone Loveday in his book, *The Romances of John Fowles*, deals principally, and in a detailed manner, with the romance structure and its consistency with Fowles's themes. Since the genre is not apologetic for its extreme sexual and social views, Fowles's elusive women and elitist heroes are rather celebrated. Our first part in this section is to present Loveday's analysis of the coherence of the genre with the controversial Fowlesian themes; next, we will apply his analysis on the four fictions we have chosen for this research. Then, we will see if Fowles's romances are subverted or not. In case of subversion, Loveday's assumptions would make Fowles unconscious of writing in the tradition of romance. Although Loveday mentions elements of parody in Fowles's romances, he does not see that parodying the genre is enough to make him labeled otherwise. Loveday announces that Fowles is best

read as a romancer (10). What we find more plausible is, and we will try to prove this, that Fowles rewrites the tradition into a parody of romance. This parody is the result of the tension of approximating the genre to realism. The frustrated text takes a rather authentic turn which breaks up with all labels. Another question that Loveday dismisses in his analysis is exploring the reason behind the subversion. That is what aim Fowles has behind this labellessness.

The structure of romance centers on the quest narrative. This underlines classical folklore tales, myths, and even medieval literature. The main protagonist goes on a journey to find a bride. The journey is not always sexualized, but the emphasis is usually in relation to the bride. The quest is personally beneficial to the protagonist, and the bride in question is a tool which tests his courage and endurance. The structure of the romance is not, as Loveday argues, always horizontal where the beginning of the quest is different from its end.

Sometimes a romance is characterized by its “spiral movement in which the end of a romance not only repeats, but also in a sense redeems, its beginning” (Loveday 8). While *The French Lieutenant's Woman* follows the first movement with an emphasis on the personal journey rather than on winning the muse, *The Magus* has a spiral movement where the protagonist works to gain back the muse he has already attained at the beginning of the quest.

The morality of romance is based on the nature of characterization and polarization of stance. The romancer attempts at creating “stylized figures which expand into psychological archetypes” where “Jung’s libido, anima, and shadow reflected in the hero, heroine, and villain respectively” rather than real life people (Frye 304). These prototypical characters occur in all of Fowles’s fiction. The potentially Few, like Miranda, Nicholas, Charles, Williams, and many others, possess the same initial inadequacies; they have to go on a quest, helped by a muse and a mentor, another archetypes of the same recurrent characters, to reconcile their anima. The themes are also polarized in the same way his characters are and so his women do not tend to resemble real women. They are symbols of a consistent structural

aim, which is romance. However, the aim of parody, as Fowles tends to parody the genre, is supposed to imitate for the sake of criticism. We have analyzed the place of the female character in Fowles's fiction and parody, in this respect, has not been working in its favor. Thus, there is no evidence in the narrative that signals elements of parody of the female heroine in romance, and so this component should be read, as Loveday guides us to from the start, as it is. Fowles's failure is not an aesthetic one; it is a failure of a feminist.

Atmosphere is another important feature in romance, and it is present in all of Fowles's fictions, except in some of his short stories. Atmosphere is equally polarized and heightened as "an idealized world, still trailing the clouds of glory of its close association with myth and magic" (Loveday 10). In romance, the place where the adventurer experiences a growth is a place that is enchanted where ordinary things turn into magical and implausible events. The aim is not to engage the reader the way realism does; it is rather to escape that reality. The aim is nothing but the ability of the writer to enchant the reader. This implausible atmosphere is present in Fowles's fiction in the form of 'domaines'. The concept has already been dealt with in the first section of the third chapter. The potentially Few goes through a quest of maturity in a distant island. The island is different from the urban world that modern society usually inhabits; thus, there is an opportunity of isolation and re-evaluation of one's place in society. The protagonist is helped by a mentor and a muse. What is different in Fowles's romances is the emphasis of the temporariness of this world. The parody lies in the writer's refusal to make this world permanent. He shocks his immature characters into a mature understanding of life's absurdity. However, even traditional romance's conception of place is not without a higher aim. The solace in a secluded place is an inherent need in the human which desires an individualist recognition of his place in nature. It is also a religious need to redeem one's individuality and its relation to nature.

We can see how existentialism fits in here. Fowles's heroes go through a similar redeeming mission, for he "associated the existentialist process of subjectification with the archetypal hero's quest for individuation and transcendence – that is with the characteristic structure of the romance" ("John Fowles's Theory of Being and Art" 24). Susana Onega goes further to discuss the compatibility of existentialism with the structure of romance by referring to the perfectionist perspective of seeing life as a 'whole' which is inherent in the existential authenticity since "seeing whole has strong visionary connotations that go back to the Romantic notion of the poet/prophet as a shaman endowed with spiritual vision or enlarged consciousness" (25). There are recurrent prophet-like characters throughout Fowles's early fiction and most evidently in his first three novels. G.P., Conchis, Sarah, Dr Grogan, and Breasley are mentors who see life wholly which makes them symbolic in the journey of the main protagonists who are at an initiation phase; the latter's perception of life is never complete and is always partly parodied. The parody is not consciously pronounced by Fowles since he wishes his characters to find meaning.

However, in his short story collection, he gives up on meaning and the parody is more pronounced. The evidence for this is the fall of the mentor; the unknown elderly narrator in "Poor Koko" is rather clueless over the young burglar's preposterous act of burning his book. He is not able to solve the enigma and the story ends on a note of acknowledged miscommunication that the supposed mentor is to be blamed on the most. While absurdism is an unfortunate accident in Fowles's former three novels, in *The Ebony Tower*, it is rather celebrated. We can conclude here that the romance that has been implied in Fowles's earlier fiction is less parodied than that which he implies in his short story collection. This means that his three first novels can be read, as Loveday concludes, as romances, but his collection of stories should be, and this goes against Loveday's argument, read otherwise. This does not mean that his former novels do not hold certain parodying techniques. They might do, yet they

might be indirect and mostly unconscious since the missions of the protagonists do not lead to full maturity and understanding of life even if Fowles's aim is for them to find some existential meaning. However, a further detailed analysis of the three novels and *The Ebony Tower* would allow us to confirm or disprove this initial presumption.

The first protagonist whose mission of maturity is frustrated is Miranda. The parody lies first in her being a female quester even if her quest is static. The romance in *The Collector* is parodied into a gothic setting which makes its discussion more suitable for the last section of this chapter. However, faithfulness to romance lies in the mind of both characters, for they "both suffer from a kind of Bovaryism in regard to their 'lovers.' Both dream of idealized lives with the beloved that are based on the substance of sentimental romance" ("A Critical Study of the Novels of John Fowles" 67). Clegg idealizes Miranda and refuses, or unconsciously oversees her, to see her as a sexual being and so when "she had killed all the romance" (C 110), it comes out as a shock to him. And Miranda feels the same about her mentor, G.P., who does not share a sexual compatibility which she is aware of: "I've been daydreaming ... about living with G.P. He deceives me, he leaves me, he is brutal and cynical with me, I am in despair. In these daydreams there isn't much sex, it's just our living together. In rather romantic surroundings. Sea-and-island northern landscapes. White cottages" (253). Both characters perfect their imaginary worlds to suit the romantic element of their fantasies, which makes them, like Fowles in *The Magus*, romancers. Clegg cages Miranda in an isolated house from the city and Miranda thinks of her life with G.P. in a distant "Mediterranean" place (253). Their writer has a different plan which criticizes the inherent medieval plot.

In traditional fairytale stories, the captor usually releases the captive or the captive comes to be rescued by a quester. Fowles reverses the main pattern of romance by killing his main protagonist. The parody is thus more powerful with a sinister atmospheric effect which is more suitable for the incorrigible autistic hero that Clegg is. Clegg is not the monster that is

characterized by physical repulsiveness, although there are elements of humanized monstrosity; he is even inferior to any mythical beast in the sense that he presents humanity at its worse. Thus, Fowles wants to convey that our most precious gift is freedom which is the most celebrated theme in romance. The absence of it is the main parody in the novel. This parody reaches the narrative structure and emphasizes a circularity of imprisonment. Clegg's narrative embodies that of Miranda as, and the reader is aware of the element of repetition present here, it would embody his new guest whose name also starts with 'M'. Circularity is a pattern of romance (Loveday 8), yet the way the novel ends and repeats itself, with the almost unconscious and unbreathing Miranda, adds an unredeeming characteristic to its rather, traditionally, redeeming value. This pattern is analyzed by Loveday, yet he does not see the parody in the unredeemed repetition.<sup>1</sup> However, if we see the story from the perverted perspective of Clegg, we would certainly be as reassured that he has found a replacement. What denies it is the existential principles instilled by Miranda's diary.

A strikingly parodied theme in *The Collector* is love. Miranda states that "sex doesn't matter. Love does" (257). This quite ironic statement is also believed by the idealist lover, Clegg. Both characters tend to idealize their lovers until they are either killed or dead. In her idealization, Miranda plays the role that Clegg does not ask of her to play, that of a teacher. She sees Clegg as the beast Caliban rather than the Ferdinand he wants to be. Miranda is also idealized by her initial asexuality by both Clegg and the author. She is the first *princesse lointaine* who loses her title when she unleashes her sexuality. This causes her catastrophic death. The "savage parody of the romance form" lies in "revealing the murderous contradictions inherent in sexual idealism" (Loveday 27).

The only theme in *The Collector* that should be read as a faithful representation of romance rather than its parody is the Many and the Few. The elitist discourse that we have criticized in the last chapter does not come from a conscious implication of romance. By

making us read *The Collector* from this perspective, Loveday is finding a way to redeem Fowles's discriminatory discourse because all other patterns, except of the female muse, are parodied. Even the domaine, the distant open and exotic land, is presented as an anti-domaine, Clegg's gothic house.<sup>2</sup> That does not mean that his other fictional works reject the reading. On the contrary, the superiority of one social group over the other is rather rightfully celebrated in *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* where the appeal of mystery as a pattern in romance is accentuated. In addition to mystery, many other patterns of romance, including atmosphere which is represented in the Fowlesian domaine, dominate both novels. Thus, the traditional theme of romance, "pervasive social snobbery", (Frye 161) is naturally coherent with the other structural elements that promote a reading of romance. The question of the importance of the implied parody here is quite intriguing, but it does have an answer that we will come to state at the end of the section.

Romancers focus on characters who are distinguished by a superiority of class. They are shamelessly aristocratic, and they go on dividing themselves into smaller groups by isolating themselves from the rest of society. Their higher position in society makes of them superior in other aspects of individuality like morality and personal achievements. In Fowles's fiction, they are referred to as the 'elect' or the Few. The rest of society is the Many, and they are necessarily inferior in terms of social class. The Few, or the potential Few, are not supposed to teach; they are to celebrate their prominence as individualists. They are to further exclude themselves in islands which are metaphoric of the importance of a personal journey. The journey's aim is not to distance the individual further from other class members; it is to prioritize individualism. Thus, Fowles's aristos is superior, not by comparison to others, but by comparison to himself. The members of the Few are viewed in relation to each other and this, according to Loveday, is reminiscent of the "late-Romantic esotericism", (141) which redeems Fowles's fictions of the social bias that its philosophy and politics endorse.

In *The Collector*, Fowles seems to be rather consciously parodying romance, since in *The Magus* his protagonist is male and does go on an open journey to find meaning. While idealization of sexuality is criticized in Clegg, it is implicitly celebrated in Nicholas. Fowles's second romance seems to be unparodied but rather 'made new.' In plot, *The Magus* is the most complex with many other sub-stories and sub-plots. However, they can be reduced into two main ones: the love story and the quest narrative (Loveday 30). Nicholas gets to meet Alison; they form a romantic attachment. Then, he leaves for a job in an exotic island, Greece. Later, the story ends with Nicholas returning to Alison. The novel is accordingly divided into three major parts that follow the plot in order. The quest is also intertwined with the love story in which Nicholas learns more about himself and about the importance of Alison as the most suitable partner. He goes on an adventure in, not just the exotic land, but even the magical sphere within the land, Conchis's Bourani.

This adventure is contradictory to the expectations in one sense. The maiden in question changes from Alison to Julie. Nicholas lives the full romance experience when he meets the latter and attempts to rescue her from her patronizing master, Conchis. The parody lies, first, in this contradiction. However, it is never fully grasped by the reader until the trial where Nicholas is finally disintoxicated. The reader is, as a result, equally disintoxicated from the romance, yet there is a sense of relief, for Nicholas's way of seeing things is self-centered. This selfishness, which is quite in place in the quester's personality, is rather criticized by the report of the trial. Thus, unlike what Loveday argues, the romance structure lies in part 2 only. Part 1 and 3 bring the hopeful quester back to reality. Patterns of romance from "its fondness of exotic setting; its leaning towards wish-fulfillment ... its freedom to set aside the constraints of plausibility" (30) which Loveday mentions all appear in Part 2 when Nicholas visits Bourani and meets the wealthy bachelor, Conchis, whose power lies in both his literary talents and affluence. Alison is the one who is mostly attached to reality, and she is contrasted

with the perfect Julie. This means that Nicholas's pursuit of her makes the novel approaches realism rather than romance.

Another important reason for our emphasis on the second part as the only representative of the romance genre is that it holds the biggest fraction of the book; plus, most of the themes of the book are highly dealt with in this part. It is in relation to Conchis, Julie, and Greece that Nicholas learns to overcome his selfishness through lessons of freedom, love, and femininity. This also makes Julie the main maiden in distress. At the end of this part, Nicholas learns more about Julie's unreality and his romantic conception of her unknown reality. This makes him contrast Julie with the real Alison. Through this realization, Fowles criticizes his own conception of Julie and all women, yet he remains guilty of his conception of Alison whom the reader is baffled as to what reason Nicholas ends up loving her again. Alison is made to parody Julie, yet the parody fails in relation to the female representation in Fowles's fiction, and we are forced to believe that women are part of the genre of romance and their exaggerated mythology is symbolic. While most of the other patterns are parodied, categorizing women and social class are celebrated which does not save the writer from the accusations we have already made against him in the last two chapters since he has proven to be a capable parody-creator.

Against this argument, Loveday explains that Fowles's prototypical women are symbolic. The symbolic value lies in them being the generators of the power of the superhero who occupies the central role in the quest. Idealizing women is not intended to make them 'other'. It is part of the "symbolic world" of the romance (141). Joseph Cambell, in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, argues that "the hegemony wrested from the enemy, the freedom won from the malice of the monster, the life energy released from the toils of the tyrant Holdfast - is symbolised as a woman. She is the maiden of the innumerable dragon slayings, the bride abducted from the jealous father, the virgin rescued from the unholy lover. She is the 'other

portion' of the hero himself' (342). Like, for instance, caricature, the use of romance as a genre is meant to evoke exaggeration. While caricature is an art that exaggerates for comic purposes, romance exaggerates for idealistic ones. That is it evokes idealistic morality through idealistic characters. The aim is not to link the human to the realistic but to project a perfect model of morality that humans can approximate to. Women are symbolic in the sense that they are the representatives of the anima, of emotional superiority and aloofness.

While Loveday makes a solid point here, for Fowles does write within the traditions of a genre that idealizes, not just women but even men, we are inclined to disagree for one particular reason. In the new urbanized world of more independent female readers and modern men, the representation of women as idealized animas should be equally parodied and not celebrated.

One of the patterns that are less unsuccessfully parodied is the *domaine*. *The Magus* is the best example of an extended *domaine* that imitates and ironizes the settings of romance as Nicholas is both enchanted and suspicious of the world created by Cochis and Greece. Greece represents the exotic unfamiliar, to both the reader and the quester, place of trials and spiritual pursuits and is contrasted with both London and Rome. At the end of Nicholas's quest in Greece, he experiences the mundane Rome and London and comments on the difference:

If Rome, a city of the vulgar living, had been depressing after Greece, London, a city of the drab dead, was fifty times worse. I had forgotten the innumerability of the place, its ugliness, its termite density after the sparsities of the Aegean. It was like mud after diamonds, dank undergrowth after sunlit marble; and as the airline bus crawled on its way through that endless suburb that lies between Northolt and Kensington I wondered why anyone should, or could, ever return of his own free will to such a landscape, such a society, such a climate. (*M* 573)

It is quite clear that Nicholas is still unable to adapt himself into the more mundane world where he is to meet the more mundane woman, Alison. Although his return is undesired, it is made necessary. Nicholas does not return ‘of his own free will’, yet he knows that to live in that exotic land would mean that he would never escape his own idealizing self. Yet this argument is not convincing since Nicholas seems to be forced to return by Conchis and Fowles. The parody is implied forcefully for the romance is still more abundantly promoted here. Fowles seems to be objecting to the temporariness of the domaine, for he makes the second part the longest and the densest. Alison is almost absent in this part which makes of her mundaneness unpromoted or rather forcefully promoted. She does appear in the center of the second part in three chapters only (39, 40, and 41) where she meets the reluctant Nicholas in Athens. They go on a semi-adventure to Parnassus where Nicholas experiences a colliding power of sexuality/nature and love that he has never experienced before. However, this new revelation does not help him realize it is enough. The reason lies in its temporariness. What challenges this temporariness with Alison is the possible unlimitedness of Julie’s promise of enchantment.

The novel is faithful to romance in its repetitions and oppositions as Loveday argues. Loveday draws a number of excessively repeated patterns that we cannot just descriptively re-mention here. What is rather interesting is the intentional opposing parts that Fowles creates at the start and the end. The novel begins with Nicholas contentedly losing his parents and contentedly breaking up with his girlfriend and ends in adopting “a proxy mother (Kemp) and sister (Jojo)” (Loveday 35). This signifies a circularity that indicates the protagonist’s emotional growth. However, this growth is questioned since Nicholas, as we have mentioned before, is acting out of trauma rather than out of an independent self. The novel is mainly ontological, for, as Nicholas realizes, “the maze has no centre. An ending is no more than a point in sequence, a snip of the cutting shears” (*M* 645). Mystery is never solved and while the

reader is hopeful about a certain epistemological end that romance promises, the end is what Nicholas himself expects, a form of satire: “an answer is always a form of death” (628). And this is pronounced by the real Lily who is supposed to be Conchis’s anima. That makes her speak for Fowles. The parody here comes against Fowles’s will, for his aim is to teach Nicholas about love and freedom which are mainly contradictory in nature.

Freedom is another theme that is unconsciously parodied by Fowles here. Fowles, in *The Aristos*, promotes existential freedom and the importance of finding meaning. This theme is reconciliatory to romance, for it is the sole literary genre that celebrates absolute freedom. Romance is unapologetic in its embrace of absolute freedom because it endorses a philosophy of individualism that can go as far as to prioritize the individual to society. Actually, the one major reason why the character of romance belongs to the aristocracy is because of his rebellious relation to society as a whole. As for duty, it is “duty to the uniqueness and identity of the self” (Loveday 144). The aim of existential freedom is thus complementary to that of freedom in romance, which is to put a focus on personal progress rather than the social one. While this theme is in great harmony with the plot of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, it rather meets a failing collision with the plot of *The Magus* which makes the journey of the protagonist a meaningless one, for there is no personal evolution, nor is there a social one. The emphasis is on a freedom to choose the right love, the real one. That freedom of choice is not convincing and Nicholas is more confused at the end than at the start. The result is thus an intentional parody and an unintentional one that challenges not only the genre of romance but all other genres that promote meaning. The Bildungsroman, which is a sub-genre in the novel, does not fulfill its purpose and subversion is what is triumphantly implied here. We are using the word ‘implied’ because Fowles has not intended it, yet his overly designed novel slips out of his authorial power. The irony here lies in that freedom is no longer the instrument of the characters, the novel, or the author himself.

*The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as it has been already indicated in the last paragraph, is a novel that has successfully intertwined the theme of freedom to the plot. Charles does not end up with his *princesse lointaine* but he challenges himself into a personal integrity that celebrates an unprecedented independence that no other character of Fowles reaches. No wonder then that Fowles's third novel is the best; its themes and plot agreement is within control. The book is also not overtly designed as *The Magus*, yet it is a romance, and so it does reveal a convinced amount of outlining and scheming, among them creating binary characters that fall under two categories. An example of this is Sarah and Ernestina who are contracted not only morally but also physically, with the first mysteriously redheaded, small, and dark-eyed and the latter brunette, round, and grey-eyed. Sarah dresses in black while Ernestina in bright colors. The contract is more morally rigorous; while Sarah is mysterious and intuitive and, thus, is sexually desired and unreachable, Ernestina is transparent, shallow and chaste.

Another example of character binary categorization is Sam and Charles. The categories here are those of the higher class and lower class which represent the Many and the Few that are reconciliatory to romance as it has been argued before. It is Charles who is elected to go on a quest to save the 'wretched' Sarah, the damsel in distress, and not Sam. What makes him eligible is his social status first, especially when we learn later that Sarah has been intelligent enough to scheme it all by victimizing herself and make him believe that he is her hero. This makes room for the first parody Fowles implies. The damsel in distress is a scheming former governess who embraces a degrading status, of "the French Lieutenant's Whore" (*FLW* 171), in a severely conservative Victorian society. Although Fowles's aim is to make her an exceptionally independent Victorian woman, the New Woman, he ends up creating a scheming villain that turns Charles's life upside down. Both readings, Fowles's and the reader's, parodies the romantic heroine.

Coincidences, repetitions, and parallelism, which accord the work to romance, are mentioned with great details in the beginning of *Loveday's* fourth chapter. We have nothing to add to his rather thorough analysis which focuses on Fowles's power at design which adds to his skill of storytelling.

Another characteristic of romance that is present and also parodied is the emphasis Fowles gives to some characters only, mainly Charles and Sarah. While Charles is more realistically approached as a character, Sarah is rather romanticized and her mysteriousness is increased by the narrator's refusal to pierce her thoughts, a controversial right to privacy which is denied to Charles. This has, unexpectedly, created more sympathy towards Charles than towards Sarah, which makes of Fowles' approach to the female mind highly criticized. The minor characters are not flat in the traditional sense as *Loveday* argues. What *Loveday* leaves out is that this is another implicit parody. What allows a certain dept of character is the not so-know-it-all omniscient narrator who claims narrowness of knowledge of his characters' minds (mainly Sarah's), yet he manages to give us glimpses of the thoughts of Ernestina, Mrs. Poulteney, and Sam. *Loveday* argues that the narrator's interference "robs them of the extremes of shadowy depth or of stereotyped flatness with which romance habitually works" (69). We would add to *Loveday's* argument that another reason for the narrator's interference is to differentiate between the Many and the Few. The reader has to know more about the characteristics of the second-class characters. Fowles, through his inauthentic characters, breaks the boundaries of romance and brings the realism into its surface. We have argued in the last section of the third chapter that Fowles's inauthentic characters are what authenticate his fiction because it is only through them that we find him less didactic.

Despite the effort of Fowles to prioritize Sarah and Charles over Ernestina and Sam, the last two act freely when they disobey their writer and display a certain uniqueness that is not promoted. For example, Ernestina is accused of being prudish, naïve, and inauthentic. She

is condemned for her inability to acknowledge her sexuality in the fifth chapter. Her interest in fashion and constant criticism of the simplicity of the Lyme society add a conceited outlook to her character. Even her physical appearance is sharply contrasted with the mysterious aura of Sarah. However, this biased status of Ernestina allows her a freedom from the author that neither Sarah nor Charles possess. She accepts Charles in spite of losing Winsyatt and in spite of her knowledge of his flaws, of having no faith in himself (*FLW* 364). Although the writer celebrates Sarah's open sexuality, Ernestina's prudishness is not seen for what it is: an intelligent disguise to survive the Victorian society.

While Ernestina is condemned for her realism, Sarah is distinguished by her mythology. She is described as "a figure from myth" (11) at the start of the novel, and Charles is constantly "unsure of the frontier between the real Sarah and the Sarah he had created in so many such dreams: the one Eve personified, all mystery and love and profundity, and the other a half-scheming, half-crazed governess from an obscure seaside town" (410-1). Charles, like the narrator, is living in a romance where Sarah is seen as a muse. However, the doubt of her being a 'half-scheming' and a 'half-crazed' governess is an intentional confession coming from the guilt of the masculine perspective that is purely the writer's who is the creator of the male mundane Charles and the narrator. This shows another sort of confession which implies the superiority of the mundane over the romantic. While the mundane Charles develops as a character, the mysterious Sarah remains a figure of mystery, and so realism triumphs over romance.

The most parodied work of romance is Fowles's *The Ebony Tower*. The collection of short stories contains a celebrated work that is not the writer's but belongs to a Celtic romance writer that Fowles highly admires. He translates Marie de France's "Eliduc" and places it in the middle of his other original stories. Loveday argues that the story appeals to Fowles because of the four following patterns that reconcile most of his themes:

There is, first, the whole aura of the mediaeval past, with its emphasis on a feudal world of solemn contract, of social life highly organised into a system of controlled rank and hierarchy .... Secondly, there is the overpowering sense of magic and myth in Celtic romance, a sense which endows quite commonplace events with profound significance. Thirdly, there is the ethos of courtly love, with its grave romanticisation of women, on which many of these romances are based. And finally ... there is the way in which crises are overcome, opposites reconciled, and contradictions transcended. (83)

The last one is parodied in all his other short stories, for failure of communication between generations is only 'overcome' in "Eliduc"; this proves that it is also the only short story that does not, since it is not Fowles's, parody romance. The mistress and the wife in "Eliduc" are reconciled when the wife retreats to the nunnery and allows her husband to be happily married to Guilliadun. Edmund Leach explains further the reconciled contradiction as part of romance by arguing that "myths serve to provide an apparent resolution, or 'medication' of problems which are by their very nature incapable of any final resolution" (54). In Fowles's original short stories, the contradiction is present, yet it is not overcome. In "The Ebony Tower", the mistress loses against the wife in a choice that approaches the real over the fantastic, even when it is highly regretted by Williams.

The first pattern mentioned above is the constant conflict between the Many and the Few, a theme which is again, and mainly, mentioned in "Poor Koko" since members of the Many are excluded in this collection of short stories. However, the personal conflict of the individual's Many and Few is present in most of them; what is intriguing and most distinguishing is the failure of the individual in triumphing over his Many, a failure which comes at odds with the existential theme. The end is rather ontological than epistemological. This is actually the most important parody in all of Fowles's works. Romance, as a genre, has

always celebrated meaning. The quest is in itself a quest to find meaning. Although Fowles places “Eliduc” as a background story to his other stories, the latter borrow the four patterns from the former only to subvert them. The result is the tension that Fowles creates in his attempt to move toward realism. Celebrated themes of adventure and manhood in romance are highly questioned in Fowles’s stories.

The second and third patterns are also mostly present, yet the second is subverted. The atmosphere of magic and myth is present in a setting of an isolated island, yet this exclusion is temporary. Fowles’s domain is both attractive and repulsive and a permanent dweller is decidedly condemned. Nicholas, in *The Magus*, is a great example of this condemnation. Breasley, in “The Ebony Tower”, who lives in his isolated castle in Brittany (a setting that is mentioned in all the other short stories and which is inspired by Marie de France’s setting in “Eliduc” ), is described by Williams as a genius for “tak[ing] an old need to escape from the city, for a mysterious remoteness, and to see its ancient solution, the Celtic green source” (*ET* 74). Nonetheless, even Breasley is criticized for taking his “mythic and timeless” space as a permanent place. Although we are made to understand that Williams envies him for the life he leads, we are also aware of the jealousy Breasley holds for Williams. The old man is forcing a life of youth on his old body and is painfully aware that Diana, whom he wants to marry even when she is half his age, is going to leave him one day as he expresses it to Williams.

“The Ebony Tower” deals with a thwarted adventure of a young painter, Williams, who visits an old and accomplished artist, Breasley. The writer leads the reader to expect that Williams is going to take the path of the adventurer and saves the damsel in distress, Diana. Although Williams is married, we are informed that it is mostly a safe relation that forbids him from experimenting in life and expanding his artistic senses. Even though the title story shares all the motifs of romance present in “Eliduc”, Fowles makes sure to subvert every single one.<sup>3</sup> Among these motifs is fulfilling the masculine role of “knight errants” (100) and “decent

prince[s]” (98). Williams is supposed to choose to be with Diana the way Eliduc chooses his mistress over his wife because we are told, in a style that imitates medieval romances, that “fidelity is a matter of taste” and not morality (98). He is not supposed to “deny experience [for] his artistic soul’s sake” (98). Williams ends up denying the experience and so his journey fails, for no, and this is among the most important motifs in romance, personal growth or maturity takes place. His growth would have indicated an artistic growth that is frustrated by his “sensible decision” (112) of going back to his wife.

Williams reaches a conclusion that Fowles intends as well; the artist does not have the same morals as the ordinary man. His duty might seem egocentric but it fulfills an end which aims at absolute freedom rather than plausibility. Williams, thus, acts in a cowardly way that approaches the real rather than the romantic. His social ideals triumph over his feelings, which are not exclusively related to Diana only, but they rather embody the desire for knowledge and for life. The story ends with an ontological note which thwarts knowledge and narrative and makes the text approach neither the romantic nor the realistic. The ontology emphasizes the absurdity of the postmodernist text.

Parody is also consciously present in Fowles’s other short stories. The patterns mentioned above are subverted and recreated to approach the real; the result is thus far from the romantic and the realistic, for the end is ontological with the absence of, not only knowledge no matter how relative it is, but of the hope of finding knowledge. “Poor Koko” does not seem, at first, to be linked to any of the other stories, yet there are few references which signify a parallel to the medieval context which the stories are placed within. The expression ‘my ordeal’ and the Cornish epigraph, which connects the story to Brittany, are the only references to medieval romance (Loveday 94). The pattern that is mostly focused on is ‘failure of communication’, yet while the text of romance creates textual tools to overcome this failure, Fowles leaves his narrator in awe at what the burglar means by burning his

lifelong project. The ending is open, yet not in the sense where the reader can make out a subjective meaning out of it; it is open to decisive unknowingness.

This decisive unknowingness describes the path taken by the detective, Michael Jennings, who is responsible for solving the case of the disappearance of a famous Conservative Member of the Parliament, John Marcus Fielding. Although the text imitates the detective story, it later ironizes it into an existential reading by Isobel, a former acquaintance of the family. Isobel's theory assumes a failure of communication of Fielding with his family. She makes sure that her story, within Fowles's story, is but one interpretation and that it should not be taken for granted. The reader is thus disappointed and unsatisfied, for the detective story structure is interrupted by another ontological reading that causes the writer himself, Fowles, to "walk out" (*ET* 239) as his main character does. Failed communication reaches all the narratives and meta-narratives of the story.

"The Cloud" is the last and most obscure short story in the collection. Barry Olshen considers it "the most difficult work to penetrate" (103). It is also the work that approaches realism the most. The patterns of romance are highly subverted, for even when the setting resembles that of "The Ebony Tower" (for both stories take place in the French countryside), it does in a way where the domaine is seen as an anti-domaine. Catherine, the main protagonist, joins her sister's family and friends in a depressive state which results from the loss of her husband. It is hinted that her husband committed suicide. Her depression affects the atmosphere of the story and the cheerful summary setting is gradually gothicized into an actual cloudy day. Catherine tries to survive by communicating her feelings discursively and sexually, but she fails.

Fowles's implementation of parody in *The Ebony Tower* is intentional. His admiration of medieval romance, which is reflected in an imitation of it, is combined with a certain critique against it, which is reflected in the use of parody. Dianne Vipond, in "*The Ebony*

*Tower and Search for Meaning*”, explains this ‘parallel’ in relation to Breasley’s painting, *Moon-hunt*, and its imitation of Uccello’s *Night-Hunt* (137). The parallel explains more about Fowles’s use of different patterns of medieval romance with a consistent parody. The use of the iconographic patterns of *Night-Hunt* in Breasley’s *Moon-hunt* “buttressed the painting before which David sat. It gave an essential tension ... behind the mysteriousness and the ambiguity ... behind the modernity of so many of the surface elements there stood both a homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition” (*ET* 23).

This dual admiration and parody stems from the artist’s ambition to offer “a succinct resolution of the tradition versus innovation motif that pervades ‘The Ebony Tower’ and alludes to Fowles’s own relationship to literary history, which is prototypically postmodern in its combination of homage and parody” (“*The Ebony Tower and Search for Meaning*” 138). This argument paves the way for our main argument that comes against Loveday’s suggestion to read Fowles’s works as romances: if the fiction shows to be appropriately read as romance, then why implement the parody in the first place? Fowles’s aim is to decategorize his writings, yet Loveday insists on categorizing them. The ultimate ambition Fowles seeks, whether it is conscious or unconscious, is to not fall under the shadow of his ancestors. The labellessness that Fowles falls into has already been labeled as postmodern since postmodernism is against all labels. Although, as we have seen in the first chapter, Fowles rejects the genre, his writing anxiety which imitates and repulses his ancestor’s writings leads him towards an ontological dilemma that asserts nothingness over knowledge. He writes in *Wormholes* that the novelist writes in-between two worlds which imitate and escape reality which express a “struggle between the desire to be exact to life as it is and the wish to be exact to one’s ‘artificial’ theories about its nature, its purpose, and the rest” (120). The dual pull of the need to escape, through romance, and the need to represent the accurate, through realism, is met by another medium which is parody, a prominent “feature of postmodernist art which allowed critics like

John Barth or Linda Hutcheon to consider Fowles a key writer linking modernism and postmodernism in Britain” (Onega 29).

Fowles’s works cannot be categorized. The writer keeps imitating and subverting patterns of romance to approach the real and the unknown. The latter triumphs over the real and the result is ontological postmodernism. Parody is the literary tool that Fowles finds useful to survive under the rich heritage of his ancestors. Although he believes that realism is the best way to write, the unexpected challenge lies in the modern writer’s anxiety to innovate in order to avoid falling under the shadow of his precursors: the modernists, the realists, and the romanticists. The formal subversion of traditional forms of writing exceed parody of romance to experiment in other different narrative and structural tools of parody that indicate an authentication of the novel rather than parodying the romance. Among these tools, which we will explore further in the coming sections, are metafiction, meta-theatre, intertextuality, and narrative unreliability.

#### 4.2. Exhausting Parody: Narrative Unreliability, Metafiction, and Open Endings

Although modernist and postmodernist literatures share the narrative unreliability, the latter emphasizes a certain postmodern parody while the former struggles to find meaning even when it fails. Postmodern parody is a tool that subverts the ancestral literary influence while it keeps the link strongly present, for it aims at imitating first. Its next aim is to draw attention to the fiction’s own constructedness (rather than the relation of fiction to reality), which is conceptualized as metafiction or self-reflexivity. Fredric Jameson refers to this type of parody as pastiche. He argues that “pastiche, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter” (17). It is in our words: an exhausted form of parody. This exhausted parody, which comes from an exhausted form, is not without an aim as Jameson

conceives. Jameson favors traditional moral ends over structural ones while the aim of postmodern parody is to make the reader aware of the constructed world of fiction. This awareness devalues the importance of the creator of the world (the writer) and announces his 'death' while making the reader more important in relation to the text. The reader is almost another character that contributes to the meaning of the text in terms of its relation to its creator and the real world.

Cooper is the critic who speaks mostly about this "fictional self-consciousness" and its relation to "the different possible freedoms available within and operating upon the text[s]" of Fowles (2). The ones 'available within' are always welcomed by Fowles but those 'operating upon' are rather regretted but necessary, as we will see later, especially in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The reason lies in Fowles's favor of the freedom of character and reader over that of the author. Although Fowles tries, structurally, to free his characters and reader, he only partially succeeds. The metafictional techniques he uses only empower him further.

Besides freedom, Fowles's aim behind using the metafictional is his interest in "the power of creativity [where he] focuses especially on the text as artifact and the author as creative artist" (8). The artist's creative power is thus explored on the thematic and the structural level. A great example of this is the mentor figure that Fowles uses in almost all his fictions. All his mentors are artists and their art is another artistic medium within the fictional medium of Fowles. Their questions about art and life hold a thematic subordination that is as important as the main Fowlesian themes. The artist/mentor in his fiction tries to find his place by imitating and parodying his ancestors and, by doing so, finds himself in the same place that Fowles finds himself in while seeking for that independence and authenticity. That place calls for a fictional self-consciousness that is shared by the contemporary postmodern author. Whether Fowles abhors the label or not, his constant interest in parody and metafiction makes of him one of the pioneers of postmodernism in British literature.

In *The Collector*, the parody is rather implicit and not as pronounced as in the other fictions. The parody present in Fowles's first novel is a parody of the gothic. The gothic subversion is to be dealt with in the last section which focuses on elements outside the narratorial scope. In this section, formal tools of parody and metafiction are explored within the narratorial scope only; that is in relation to the narrator. The first person narrators in *The Collector* have already been dealt with in the second chapter. While Miranda's diary is open, it is still didactic; Clegg's narrative is a work of genius, for Fowles manages to represent his perverted mind through his simple and derivative style that promotes that appealing freedom of character that the writer wishes for. It is also Clegg who wins the reader's sympathy, not through his actions, but through his unpretentiousness and his embraced inferiority. Although Fowles's aim is to free Miranda, her emancipation is impossible on the thematic as well as on the formal level. Her narrative is positioned in between the two accounts of Clegg. Clegg begins the story and ends it, which allows him to control. This allows the main theme of imprisonment to merge within the narrative and allows the novel a coherent thematic and aesthetic whole that the next novel lacks. In *The Collector*, Fowles explores themes of freedom, imprisonment, and madness that the unreliable narrative embraces in a consistent manner.<sup>4</sup> The parody in the narrative lies in celebrating the mad. This has already been explored in modernist literature; however, the mad is usually the existentialist not the absurdist. Clegg subverts the meaning that Miranda creates through his narrative. While Miranda struggles to reconstruct her world and his through didacticism, Clegg frustrates her attempts unintentionally. He sees nothing in the works of fiction that she offers him to read in order to detect his anti-heroic behavior. Clegg is not simply blind to his faults; he sees in them unflinching platonic attempts to love.

In *The Magus*, Fowles experiments further with narrative unreliability that his novel reaches a form of postmodern paranoia. The unreliability is that of the first person narrator,

who is also the protagonist of the novel, and the magus/mentor of the novel, Conchis. The story of *The Magus* has a within story, or rather stories. In other words, *The Magus* is not a subverted story only; it is a story about subversion. The masque of Conchis is at the center of the book where Nicholas is initiated. Conchis's work includes oral stories, several dramatic pieces, letters, pamphlets, pictures, paintings, and newspaper cuttings. Nicholas doubts the "virginity" (M 133) of Conchis's account and declares that "there was some fatal extra dimension in his objectivity, which was more that of a novelist before a character than of even the oldest, most changed man before his own real self" (133). This also can be said of Fowles's own novel, for Nicholas is the character who is a reader as much as we are characters in Fowles's obsessive web. Nicholas does not suspend disbelief the way a reader should and so we act in the same way. The aim of Fowles resembles that of Conchis, which consists of shocking the reader's (who is also the critic) confidence about the possibility of knowledge. The aim of the metafiction is thus ontological which means it reinforces meaninglessness. Lily de Seitas confirm this by stating that "an answer is always a form of death" (628). With Alison joining the masque, Nicholas comes "to call into question everything that has happened – and will happen – to him, arousing an unlimited suspicion that would seem like paranoia if events did not so frequently confirm it" (Loveday 36). The unreliability of Conchis's tales generates a sort of postmodern paranoia in the narrative of the clueless reader, Nicholas.

Nicholas is not wholly misguided by Conchis. Conchis's identity has to be understood in relation to his role as an artist. He is the magician, the magus of the book. It is through Conchis's principles about art that we can understand how to approach his masque and thus Nicholas's rewriting of it. Nicholas's role in Bourani and Conchis's masque is symbolic of ours in reading *The Magus* which makes "these internal and external texts both functioning perhaps as metaphors for the impenetrable text of human existence. For both the reader and

the character-as-reader, then, the initiation into existential wisdom is also the initiation into artistic wisdom, and specifically into knowledge of narrative” (Cooper 60). The key word in here is ‘impenetrable’ which also describes the absurdist quality of human existence that resembles the texts that Fowles creates, and so metafiction approximates reality to fiction rather than the opposite. Where, traditionally, fiction had to resemble reality, postmodern metafiction forces reality to resemble the fictional world.

Nicholas’s initiation into Conchis’s masque is already conditioned by the latter’s definition of the novel as ‘dead’, yet even Conchis subverts this definition by offering fictional autobiographical proofs in the form of fake letters and pamphlets. Among these fake documents is the pamphlet of Robert Foulkes. The four autobiographical stories he tells are not to be confirmed. Even the paintings he displays in his house turn out to be unoriginal. This rather confirms the status of Conchis as a “novelist sans novel, creating with people, not words” (*M* 242). What adds to the fictionality of his works is the theatrical pieces he creates where Nicholas serves as a character and reader. Conchis then is not against the novel’s fictionality as much as he is against the novel’s ‘written material’. He, thus, does what Fowles does in *The Magus*; he subverts the form.

The creative power, thus, becomes a prominent theme since Conchis is to be perceived as an author and so his theories about the novel in particular and fiction in general are at the thematic center of *The Magus*, for “Bourani is Conchis’s text just as *The Magus* is Fowles’s. it is no accident that the old man refers to Leverrier’s experience on the island as one of Bourani’s ‘chapters’” (Cooper 62). *The Magus* is thus, according to Cooper, an allegory of the act of creation. It examines ways of realizations, conception, and responding (62), making the question of how to become an authentic artist as important as how to become an authentic individual. The artificiality of Bourani makes the reader of *The Magus* aware of its own constructedness. It is Bourani, Conchis’s text, that gives *The Magus*, Fowles’s text, this

significance of insignificance. Bourani brings the reader's awareness to *The Magus's* artificiality; as a result, the reader does not suspend disbelief. It is mostly Nicholas, the reader of Bourani and character/writer of *The Magus*, who guides us through both texts.

Nicholas plays the role of the guide to the way we should read *The Magus*. The text he reads is that of Conchis. His constant decoding of Conchis's plays and stories work within the realm of our decoding of *The Magus*. His failure is ours. However, what is more important is not Nicholas's failure; it is his realization of that failure. His method of reading is simply conceived of as abominable by Fowles, for "the peril of sense-making is that those things that do not fit its laws and protocols do not go away, do not die; one simply becomes unconscious of what has been overlooked or discarded" ("Narrative and Image in *The Magus*" 78). And it is exactly the 'overlooked' and 'disregarded' that generates a certain power within the individual. Epistemology is not the end even if it is the means. Great art stirs emotion through the meaningless rather the meaningful. This is exactly the way Fowles wants his texts to be read, in a telepathic yielding way that resists meaning. However, there is another dimension that subverts even this conception. It lies in Nicholas finally realizing that Conchis is trying to find meaning though implementing him as a younger version of himself in his stories. Conchis is the writer who was once a character. Nicholas is the writer (of *The Magus*) who was once a character (in Bourani). He confirms this when he comments on the masque:

It fascinated and irritated me, like an obscure poem—more than that, for it was not only obscure in itself, but doubly obscure in why it had even been 'written.' During the evening a new theory had occurred to me: that Conchis was trying to recreate some lost world of his own and for some reason I was cast as the *jeune premier* in it, his younger self. (*M* 192)

Although Conchis asks Nicholas to simply surrender his senses and feel instead of analyze, he speaks out of a position of power. That power is the author's. It is shared by Fowles, for, while

both deny their readers the full freedom to decode, they own an absolute power of encoding. This further confirms the absolute power that the creator owns. Conchis's creative powers are unnerving and Nicholas's inferiority as a reader is easily detectable; he describes the masque as "blind man's buff. Being spun so much that you lose all sense of direction" (*M* 214). Another example of Conchis's superior epistemological power over Nicholas is when Conchis tells the latter about his experiences in the first war; he offers him the same test (the poison tooth test which represents heroism) he went through and Nicholas is transformed "from voyeur to protagonist" ("Narrative and Image in *The Magus*" 79). Hence, the metafictional techniques used in *The Magus* empower the artist further and confirm his dominance over the audience; this is another important result rather than an aim, since Fowles is not pleased to demonstrate such superiority. His aim is rather the freedom of his character and readers.

The inherent aim is the question of meaning. The failure of Nicholas as a reader is a failure of clarifying the mysterious. The power of mystery lies in the reader's failed attempt of unfolding it. Nicholas's rational conceptions of the masque resemble that of Mike Jennings in "The Enigma". Jennings is guided by Isobel in the same way Nicholas is guided by Conchis; they both should avoid the rational detecting mentality to accept, rather than understand, the mystery of life. Conchis's masque defies meaning and promotes mystery: "mystery has energy. It pours energy into whoever seeks the answer to it. If you disclose the solution to the mystery you are simply depriving the other seekers" (*M* 235). Fowles's aim is then to guide his readers and critics to understand that the novel's impenetrability is part of the artistic power it generates. The word 'mystery' is mentioned forty-six times in the novel, denying its interpreters the desire to collect.

Collecting and categorizing here are the opposite of mystery. We have already dealt with the theme in the second chapter and mainly when we have analyzed *The Collector*; however, *The Magus* presents us with a collector, de Deukans, and an enchanter, Conchis. The

artist, Conchis, defies the mentality of labeling and interpreting, but he does label and interpret. Nicholas reminds us, in the intoxication day, of Prufrock in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot. Prufrock describes his state in the mid of the crowd in the same way Nicholas describes his when he is finally psychoanalyzed by Conchis and his jury: “And I have known the eyes already, known them all—/ The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,/ And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,/ When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,/Then how should I begin/ To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?” (7). In this stanza, Prufrock expresses his lack of confidence and power to explain himself after being labeled. During the intoxication, Nicholas feels the same, for he is labeled and categorized by the artist that abhors categorization and promotes mystery. The act further complicates Nicholas’s position as an interpreter. This complication is not without solution, for he does react by ‘writing’ *The Magus* as a way to free himself from categorization. Thus, the artist is always able to categorize as much as the audience does. Even if Fowles abhors the action, he cannot escape it. The mystery is then a result of trauma rather than the generosity to free.

What allows Nicholas ‘writing’ his story is his role as a first-person narrator. Although it is established that Fowles is the writer of *The Magus*, it is necessary for us, as readers, to perceive the text as a product of its teller, Nicholas. While Conchis’s stories are unreliable, for he even stages his death at the end of the masque, Nicholas’s narrative, encompassing these stories, is also unreliable. The unreliability of Nicholas puts the reader in the same position Nicholas occupies when he is forced, as a character, into Conchis’s theatre. The ideas implemented and construed are subverted constantly because each new conception is put into question. According to Loveday, the subversion of the narrative lies in the use of four devices.

The first device lies in Nicholas’s name in juxtaposition to Alison’s. The names bring to mind Geoffrey Chaucer’s the Miller’s story in *The Canterbury Tales*. The story centers on two shallow personalities, Alison and Nicholas, “of a bawdy story” (Loveday 37). The story,

as Fowles asserts in the forward to the novel, is that of “adolescence written by a retarded adolescent” (*M* 9). Nicholas’s last name, ‘Urfe’, associates him with ‘earth’ which makes of him a “true representative face of a modern Everyman” (9). He is also described as an anti-hero in the last part and chapter of the book. He is thus unworthy of the intricateness that the godgame offers. In answering the reason for being an elect, Conchis declares that it is the working of hazard. Anyone would do to play the role. Loveday also speaks of the sexual significance of the relationship between Alison and Nicholas and draws our attention to the irony “that the Chaucerian parallel calls to mind” (37).

The second device that is used to subvert the narrative is Nicholas’s “over-ripe and self-indulgent” style (37). Among these problems of the narrative is the arrogant use of the definite article ‘the’ to suggest “that the reader is familiar with what is being described” (37). Nicholas’s letters are another example of his genuine insincerity towards himself and Alison. The first one he writes is as insincere as his last one. He declares in both that he has “been sadder than [he] could show” (*M* 48) and that he “ought to love [her even in his] perfect-bastard fashion” (279). After posting the letter, he admits that there is some “conscious exaggeration” in it (280). In addition to his insincere and pompous language, Nicholas, as we have seen in the former chapter, uses many allusions to other literatures and Greek mythology to describe his experiences in Bourani and his relation to Lily and Alison. He constantly edges his feelings and conceptions “out of the moral world into the aesthetic, where it was easier to live with” (401). Nicholas’s referential style makes of him less authentic as a writer and less reliable as a narrator. His true feelings escape us and we are left with an anxious competitive art form that works against that of his ancestor, Conchis. The metafictional device is then a means for power for the successor against his ancestor, an exhaustion of pastiche to a neuro-aesthetic level.

The third device that Loveday mentions is that of the ‘narrative standpoint’ which indicates the gap in between the time that the events take place and the time they are written. The book has been written years after what happens to Nicholas in Bourani and Nicholas seems to recall every detail. Although, according to Loveday, this does not have to be an issue, for “we are trained to accept such improbabilities [, yet] we do expect the narrator to lay his cards on the table” (38). However, Nicholas does not. His motifs, intentions, and feelings are not clear and we have no full knowledge of his real self. The future in which he writes in is not just undecided; it is intentionally left vague. He ends the book in the “frozen present tense” (*M* 656). He never explains how, for instance, “years later [he] discovered that [Mitford] *had* been acting that day” (616). And so we are more mistrustful of his credibility.

The fourth device is the intrusion of the writer in the last chapter. Although we are aware of Nicholas narrating still, the allusion to the ‘anti-hero’ on page 645 and the tone in which the writer speaks make us feel that he is addressing another literary audience besides himself. The anti-hero is mentioned in a third person narrative referring to the general conception of the term rather than Nicholas: “The smallest hope, a bare continuing to exist, is enough for the antihero’s future; leave him, says our age, leave him where mankind is in its history, at a crossroads, in a dilemma, with all to lose and only more of the same to win; let him survive, but give him no direction, no reward” (645). The writer here interferes to challenge Nicholas’s authority and so he ends up subverting the narrative at the end of Nicholas’s journey which is supposed to be fruitful. Thus, the end offers ‘no direction’ or ‘reward’ and Nicholas’s journey as a member of the Few is thwarted by the author himself; this subverts not only the narrative but Fowles’s epistemological ideas. Nicholas’s unreliability is a generalized form of unreliability towards a social group that Fowles thinks of as the elite.

The ending in *The Magus* is unsatisfactory even if Fowles allows us some hints of the reunion of Nicholas and Alison. The book ends in the ‘frozen present’ and Alison is ‘silent’ (656). However, the key phrase to the hint is “anagram made flesh” (656). Alison’s name is an anagram of Nicholas’s and so the two names ‘made flesh’ is a reference to their union, for the Christian marital state is referred to as ‘be one flesh’. The second hint is the Latin expression that Fowles ends the novel with: “Cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet” (656). The quote is taken from the opening lines of a third century Latin lyric entitled “The Vigil of Venus”. The quote translates to: “tomorrow let him love, who has never loved; he who has loved, let him love tomorrow” (Reynolds and Noakes 122). Fowles seems to want to reunite his protagonists and imply that Nicholas’s journey has taught him something. If we are to rely on this reading, then we are to distrust the ontological absurdity of the many tools of the narrative that Fowles uses. The metafictional techniques, along with the unreliability of the narrative, have an aim that exclusively subverts meaning. In addition to that, Fowles confirms the indeterminacy through answering two different letters he received from readers about the ending in two different ways. The first letter expresses an angry and rude tone of a female reader who seeks an answer to the meaning of the last passage and whether the two lovers reconcile or not. Fowles denies her the satisfaction and answers that they do not. He answers the second letter, however, in an opposite way. When asked about the reason for giving opposite answers, Fowles replies: “I tell that story because that’s how I feel – I don’t know the answer” (*Conversations with John Fowles* 137).

Cooper believes that the ending brings one major contradiction to the narrative. Nicholas is forced to choose Alison in spite of the highly promoted discourse of freedom. The reason for this contradiction is mainly the first person narrative technique which is quite incompatible with the used metafictional techniques. In *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, the indeterminacy of the endings that the third person narrative supports (for there are three

alternative endings) is compatible with the metafictional techniques and the celebrated theme of freedom. The ending simply “offers no satisfactory or reliable answers to those questions raised about” Nicholas’s development or the reader’s understanding on how to judge Alison’s interference in the masque (Cooper 78). The ending promotes mystery by Nicholas, the second writer in the book. Its indeterminacy is a kind of a writer’s way to revenge and compete against the ideologies and aesthetics of his ancestor. He uses the written word as a tool against Colchis’s theatre.

Cooper calls Nicholas’s product ‘a novel’ instead of an ‘autobiography’ since Nicholas is hardly reliable and since his act of writing is in itself a form of retaliation against the ideology of the ‘death of the novel’: “By turning the masque itself into a novel, by aligning it finally with fiction if not with life, Nick confines the magus and his notions between the covers of a book” (97). Thus, the struggle to achieve independence and authenticity for the contemporary artist, the son, under the exhaustively creative genius of the father is an important theme that results from the intertextual relations of Conchis’s texts and Nicholas’s. Fowles represents in both the struggles he faces in writing, yet his metafictional tools in this novel further complicate its ideology of freedom. The triumph is that of the artist and not the individual character. The aesthetic of the frozen ending brings the reader to an endless pit of absurdism. Fowles has confirmed this when he describes *The Magus* as “a fable about the relationship between man and his conception of God” (*Conversations with John Fowles XIV*). God is to be made ‘dead’, like the novel, but to be irreplaceable, for Nicholas ends in a state of powerlessness that the Nietzschean overman denies.

*The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, on the other hand, balances the discourses of power and freedom through his metafictional and narrative devices. Fowles’s choice of the omniscient narrator makes it easier for him to interfere with absolute power. It is easier to draw the reader’s attention to the fictionality of the work when the narrator does not play a

certain role in the story. However, the omniscient narrator denies that power when he directly addresses the reader in chapter 13. This chapter is mostly non-fictional, for even when the novel takes place in the nineteenth century, the narrator lives in the twentieth century:

If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in ... a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word. (*FLW* 97)

This chapter focuses on the first metafictional device Fowles uses in the novel. The reader is interrupted by an analysis of the development of story-telling from the Victorian to the twentieth postmodern age. The reader has already been aware of this combination persona in the narrator from earlier chapters. In chapter 11, the narrator includes colloquial language from the late twentieth century (like “planet he has just landed” (86)), and he combines it with the highly linguistic mannerism of the Victorian age.

The quote above prompts the reader to form two principles about the narrator/author. One is that he is not altogether powerful, for he announces that “the story [he is] telling is all imagination” and that he is only ‘pretending’ to know about his characters’ minds because he writes in a tradition that brings him to the status of God, the Victorian tradition of the absolute-knowing narrator. The other principle is the author is ‘dead’. This gives power to his characters, and, most importantly, his readers. What is interesting is, as we will come to see later, that the author subverts these principles even when he declares them.

Although the ‘I’ that Fowles inserts here is not, as he claims, himself, it is still a powerful character. He comments on this ‘I’ in *Wormholes* that “the ‘I’ who will make first-person commentaries here and there in my story, and who will finally even enter it, will not be

my real 'I' in 1967; but much more just another character, though in a different category from the purely fictional ones" (18). Thus, when the narrator draws our attention to the fictionality of the world he creates, he is also drawing our attention to the fictionality of his existence (for "perhaps [he] now lives in one of the houses [he has] bought into the fiction" (*FLW* 97)), and so the product is "a number of worlds within worlds. The core or most traditional novelistic universe is that of the characters. Outside and including that is a world in which exist a man in the train, the impresario – in other words, the narrator's personae who enter at times the core world" (Hutcheon 57). Even within the world of the characters, there is another world. The stories Sarah and Dr Grogan tell are also worlds of their creation within the world of the fictional author/narrator within the world of Fowles who "masterminds ... the tensions which exist between these worlds and which are functional within the novel as a whole" (58).

What subverts Fowles's ideology (through the narrator) is the contradictory claims he makes in the same metafictional chapter. When he feels he has "broken the illusion", he states that his "characters still exist, and in a reality no less" (*FLW* 99). The other claim is that he cannot "control these creatures of [his] mind, any more than you control—however hard you try, however much of a latterday Mrs. Poulteney you may be—your children, colleagues, friends, or even yourself" (99). These claims are simply irreconcilable; however, what Fowles seems to suggest is 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" (98). A novelist is thus the first and last planner, yet his planning should make his characters seem free and independent from his power. In this, Fowles only partially succeeds.

Against this principle of freedom of character is the strategic placement of chapter 13. The question asked before Fowles draws our attention to the fictionality of the work is "who is Sarah? Out of what shadows does she come?" (96). By commenting on his characters' freedom and privacy, he offers an indirect answer to the question asked in the preceding

chapter. Sarah's thoughts are hidden from us. This strategy would allow Fowles to plan against his reader's expectation, for to explain Sarah's thoughts would mean to uncover his design and suspend the climax of suspense around the story. This allows him the power to 'mastermind' all the worlds within his novel. Loveday believes that chapter 13 is a type of a "disguise or diversion to distract attention from the main" designing process (57). In addition to that, Fowles is simply trying to survive his age by adopting the principles of the 'nouveau roman'. The other aim lies in the author's need to distance himself from the narrator; it is rather the narrator who refuses to enter the mind of Sarah and not Fowles. This would have not been problematic if Fowles wholly embraces the 'nouveau roman' as a highly celebrated form of the novel.

Fowles, in his non-fictional essays, states that "The *nouveau roman* school makes me ashamed to be a Francophile" (W 11). He adds in another essay that "Alain Robbe-Grillet's polemical essay 'Pour un nouveau roman' (1963) is indispensable reading for the profession, even where it produces no more than total disagreement" (16). The problem in Grillet's 'polemical' perception of fiction, according to Fowles, is its insistence on reducing "the purpose of the novel to the discovery of new forms", which denies the novel other more important purposes like "to entertain, to satirize, to describe new sensibilities, to record life, to improve life, and so on" (16). We can see clearly here that Fowles has also made a new realization. It is quite impossible to write within the same tradition of his ancestors and so he finds in the author's role as God improbable. Thus, his mixed attraction and repulsion for the realist tradition obliges him to experiment, to "transcend iron reality" (119). Rewriting the novel would not only free his characters but himself as well, for to write within the same tradition means to be categorized as an impersonator rather than an independently creative artist.

This double perspective leads Fowles and his narrator to different approaches to his characters' minds. He uses his postmodern perspective when he deals with Sarah and his Victorian omnipotence when he deals with the other characters in the novel. We are, for instance, to know his opinion about Ernestina's deepest sexual thoughts, yet we know nothing of Sarah's, not even at the end of the novel. The reason for this might be the importance of Sarah to generating the mystery of his work of art. Sarah is the ontological perspective in the novel. She is the subversive tool. Unlike the Victorian novelist, the postmodern author is more obsessively aware of his characters' freedom, so Fowles brings that awareness in Sarah. Still, the declared freedom that Fowles pretends to celebrate in chapter 13 is suspicious. Sarah's freedom seems to be a disguise for the author's absolute power. He brings the reader's attention to the constructedness of the work of fiction only after he asks who she is. This disqualifies her as an artist figure, for she is less powerful than Conchis. Sarah's power of creativity is weakened by the same metafictional techniques that rather strengthen Fowles's. Fowles himself admits to having the ultimate power, unlike what he tries to affirm in chapter 13, in the narrative. He admits that the author does control his characters and that he is "playing a sort of double trick on the reader. Of course I control the text [;] we all do" (Qtd in Woodcock 98). The three endings that the narrator proposes are, in a sense, an example of this authority.

The multiple endings are intended to express and embody the principle of freedom that Fowles admires on the structural and the thematic level. If the characters are really free, then there should be just one ending. The omniscient narrator might simply know what the other characters think while forbidding himself from controlling their way of thinking. He can simply be an observer and a recorder. However, he chooses to enter the text as a character and impose his power in a new metafictional way that further strengthens his role in the text. In chapters 55 and 61, the narrator, who is described as Fowles in his forties (the actual age in

which Fowles wrote the novel), becomes a character and faces Charles on the train while recording Charles's struggle of deciding his future. The narrator's untrustworthiness lies exactly in here, for while he refuses to enter the mind of Sarah, he uses, not only internal omniscience and indirect speech, but actually enters the text as a fellow character with Charles.

The author in chapter 55 is thus described as "a massively bearded face ... of forty or so" (387). The chapter is epigraphed by a quote that further strengthens the role of the author in regards to Charles. The quote is from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). The epigraph refers to a conversation between Tweedledum and Alice, in which the first tells the latter about her existence in the king's dream only; if the king is to wake, she would cease to exist. Alice confidently refuses this perception. Fowles is trying to tell us that even if he chooses to make his narrator a character in the novel, he is not to disturb this fictional world the way he does with Sarah. The 'king' is thus relatively powerless only in relation to Charles who is allowed to choose to stay with Sarah or imagine another future for himself. Sarah's life changes according to the ending that Charles decides.

The author enters Charles's railway compartment on his way to London and tosses a coin to settle on the designing end of his novel. The impression we get is that, again, the narrator is the most powerful character in the novel, for he is after all the one to decide on Charles's faith; yet while he is sure in chapter 13 that his characters are free, he is rather confused as whether he should use his creative power to empower his characters or not; he asks "what could I do with you?" (389). The narrator as character interferes here to show us that he cannot meddle as a Victorian author would. He is torn between allowing "no place for the open, the inclusive ending" (389) and its opposite, a settled closure. After this incident lies the novel's second and third endings, which are the opposite of the first that is imagined by Charles on his way to London in chapter 44. By giving the reader a glimpse of Charles's

imagination before he sits with him in that compartment, the narrator allows Charles some freedom of his own and allows himself the traditional closed ending of the Victorian ancestor. We later learn that this first ending is mostly improbable (especially when we relate it to the theme of existential freedom) but that does not mean that it is structurally unimportant. The first ending, where Charles ends in a happy marriage with Ernestina, represents the narratorial schizophrenia that defines the novel.

The second entrance of the narrator in the text occurs at the beginning of chapter 61. His “once full, patriarchal beard has been trimmed down” and “he looks very much as if he has given up preaching and gone for grand opera” (440-1). The author here has changed his character in the sense that he is much changed from the person who enters Charles’s train compartment and decides on the first traditional Victorian close ending. Here, his beard ‘is trimmed down’ and he no longer preaches on his readers, for he is to create the most important ending in the book or, in his words, allow his characters to create their own stories free from his godly will. He is described as a planner still, for he turns the time of his watch fifteen minutes back and creates a different ending from that in the preceding chapter.

These two physical interventions of the narrator/author as character seem to further declare the death of the author. The metafictional devices make the reader more aware of the unreliability of the narrative and its epistemological aim. The freedom Fowles preaches is inherently subverted by its own tools of metafiction. Although Fowles’s aim is to structurally free his characters who are seeking existential freedom, the reader’s awareness of the constructedness and fictionality of his work destroy the characters’ development and maturity. Sarah and Charles are not free in chapter 60 while they are supposed to be free in chapter 61. The question is: how do they develop into two different characters in subsequent chapters? We cannot know. This makes the author more powerful than ever. Although he claims that he is not as omnipotent in the narrative as his ancestors, Fowles settles the matter in an interview

and affirms that “it’s silly to say the novelist isn’t God ... because ... when you write a book you are ... a tyrant, you are the total dictator” and that “it is difficult for a character in the book to stand up and say, you cannot do that” ( *Conversations with John Fowles* 40). There is no other creative power other than that of the narrator/author who serves as a surrogate for Fowles the way Nicholas and Conchis do. We, as reader, still suspend disbelief at the process of reading. We cannot say the same about Sarah as creator though, for her powers are castrated by her own fictionality.

The metafictional is used in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* in ways that contain consistently the main theme of the novel. This has proved to be a failure in *The Magus*. Freedom in the latter is thwarted by the use of the first person narrator, and the indeterminacy of the ending is at odds with the overly structural efforts to uphold it. In creating an omniscient and powerful narrator, Fowles maps a consistent whole to the novel. The emphasis on individual freedom is met with three different endings that have been the focus of criticism. This technique of indeterminacy has given way to three different types of freedoms. The first is the author’s; the second is the character’s, mainly the protagonist; the third is the reader’s, for he is also to choose a probable one that accords to his interpretation.

While the first one imitates the principles of closure of the Victorian ancestors, the others parody it. The first occurs in chapter 44 before the narrator enters the text. Charles chooses Ernestina over Sarah and guarantees his social and economic survival through his relation with her father. This ending is seen as the most improbable since the reader is aware that there are 150 pages left to read. Another reason for the improbability is the narrator’s tone and style. The first paragraph is written with several short sentences describing the practicality, rather than the romance, in Charles’s preparation to decide on their marriage. We are also told that Charles survives Ernestina “by a decade (and earnestly mourned her throughout it)” (*FLW* 325), while in a former chapter we have been informed by the narrator

that Ernestina reaches an older age. The use of ‘earnestly’ to describe Charles’s feeling after the death of his wife is ironic since the word is a literal allusion to her name and illustrates a lack of seriousness from the author’s side. It is only in chapter 45 that the reader realizes that his doubts about this ending are correct. The narrator announces that he has brought “this fiction to a thoroughly traditional ending” because “we have a habit of writing futures of ourselves [and] Charles was no exception” (327). In fact, the preceding chapter is “not what happened, but what Charles spent the hours between London Exeter imagining might happen” (227); the narrator is allowing his character the freedom to write his own ending through his imagination. However, since the celebrated theme of the novel is that of existential freedom, it would be quite inauthentic of both Charles and his creator to settle for this conventional end. The reader, thus, expects, as the events trigger a curious expectancy of another important encounter, another meeting with Sarah. And it is this meeting that problematizes the resolution between the two last endings.

Although many critics pronounce the second ending to be a conventional one as well, including Fowles’s wife, Charles’s choice of Sarah makes it different from the first one. He sacrifices wealth and status and chooses a woman whose name connects her to ‘tragedy’ which is symbolic of a certain nihilistic aspect of his choice. The ending is nevertheless conventional because it is determined and defined. There is resolution to the climax which the former chapters help escalate. Thematically speaking, the second ending supports Charles’s search for freedom, yet that freedom is shown to be quite limiting. The reason why we are made to believe it is limiting is the last ending. Charles chooses independence from Sarah in chapter 61 where he is celebrated by the author in the famous closing lines: “And out again, upon the unplumb’d, salt, estranging sea” (445). Here he is especially congratulated for his choice because life is absurd and Sarah, “however advantageously she may in some ways seem to fit the role of Sphinx,” is but “one riddle and one failure to guess it” (445). The last

ending is undetermined as the faith of Charles. Once again, Fowles stresses the ontological over the epistemological; however, in this novel, it is achieved with an aesthetic superiority that appeals to the reader who is not challenged to compete in an ontological game of powers the way he does in *The Magus*. Mystery is once again prioritized over meaning.

In *The Ebony Tower*, Fowles's main theme is the nature of fiction rather than existential freedom. Thus, he takes on his metafictional experimentation to an extreme level, focusing mainly on the fictionality of fiction. The exception lies in the first short story, yet even "The Ebony Tower" discusses the nature of art in general. Breasley and Williams get into several debates about abstract and impressionistic art and how the latter is superior in the sense that it does not simply experiment but represents a certain reality of human condition. The human condition dealt with in the short stories is the artist's condition and his struggles to portray the world in a way that does not allow him to repeat and copy his ancestors' legacy. Fowles does so by using the meta-art in his first short story. He creates, in linguistic terms, portraits of his characters that resemble those impressionistic paintings that he admires. The characters are placed within a frame that resembles that of Conchis's theatre (Cooper 154). The settings, the lighting, and the mood are made to assimilate painting into fiction and art into life. At dinner, "lamplight made the scene like a Chardin, a Georges de la Tour; very peaceful" (*ET* 40). Williams speaks of the forest as it has been recreated, for it "stood all around its shores, not a house in sight; the water a delicate blue in the September sunlight, smooth as a mirror. The place had featured in two of the last period paintings and David had a sense of familiarity, of *déjà vu*" (59). Williams is seeing reality from an already existing perspective of its representational facet, that of Breasley's paintings. In here, reality is described as if it is an imitation of art, and art is made to be the source of inspiration to our perception of reality. It is art that brings meaning to reality and not the opposite. Meaning is thus not only subverted by also reversed.

In “Poor Koko”, Fowles brings the unreliability of the first person narrative into scrutiny. The unknown narrator finds no explanation to the burglar’s act of turning his most important work to “cremated human knowledge” (173) which is symbolic of the death of absoluteness in the former omniscience of narrative. All we know, as readers, is what the narrator knows, which is very little indeed, for he only speculates. His snobbishness is also another reason for his unreliability and the gap there is between his generation and that of the burglar extends his epistemological limitation which leads to a further epistemological limitation to the story. He declares: “I have always found my own faults more interesting than other people’s virtues” (149). As a result, the reader distances himself from any answer the narrator achieves. The metafictional employment of the act of writing itself as a theme and how the narrator struggles in “the making of a story” (158) create another form of distrust between the writer/narrator and the reader. The narrator states that he is determined to create comic scenes through his “mimicking accents” skill (162), yet he tries to avoid this for fear of misrepresentation. This struggle is faced by every writer, for he is convinced that ‘if books have not taught me to admire and desire the truth in writing, I have wasted my entire life’ (146). The subversion lies in the acute relativity of truth in the narrator’s story, for the reader is left with no accurate conclusion since there are “numerous barriers” of writing truthfully, among them the real motifs of the burglar and what he was thinking when he burnt the book (Acheson 53).

“The Cloud” is considered as “the most difficult work to penetrate” (Olshen 103). The reason lies in the many gaps that are left by the omniscient narrator who refuses to present the reader with what is going on in the characters’ minds. Catherine’s personality is fragmented as a result of depression. The reasons are not mentioned but rather understood to be her husband’s suicide. What adds to the complexity of the story is the allusion to Roland Barthes as a way to draw the reader’s awareness to the fictionality of the text and the distrustfulness of

verbal language as a means to communicate. This further subverts meaning in the text which uses the least dependable means to communicate, which is language. Mystery is thus further emphasized and the reader is left with “a mysterious cloud, the kind of cloud one will always remember because it is so anomalous, so uncorresponding with the weather knowledge that even the most unobservant acquire” (*ET* 297).

Fowles’s use of metafiction and narrative unreliability adds mystery to the text which results in an ontological open ending and indeterminacy that guarantees him a place amongst the best postmodernist authors in history. The tension between creating and subverting meaning generates a textual paranoia that asserts that Fowles’s narrators, who are mostly his surrogates, have a schizophrenic approach to reality, for they aim to find meaning like their ancestors only to challenge it. Although the explicit aim is to add mystery and to free the characters and readers, metafiction empowers no one but Fowles and his surrogates.

#### 4.3. Intertextuality and Genre Patterning: Literary Allusion, the Gothic, the Historical, and Other Intertextual Sub-genres

With intertextuality, Fowles adds more mystery to his texts. As a result, the reader finds interpretation dependable on conflicting literary allusions and different subgenres of literature in the same text. Intertextuality also encompasses parody and pastiche, for imitating literary styles has an aim that results from the struggle the writer goes through in creating the impossible, which is the ‘new’. Through the former sections, we have witnessed the main reason why Fowles uses some of the forms of intertextuality, which is not falling under the ancestor’s creative scope. Parody distinguishes his texts from his ancestors’ while metafiction reinforces his creative powers. Finding meaning depends on the reader’s understanding of these intertextual relations, which usually ends in finding several interpretations, as we have seen in the former sections. In this section, we will analyze other intertextual tools that guarantees Fowles’s place in the generation of postmodernists which he later confesses he

belongs to.<sup>5</sup> We will start with the usual method of moving from his first novel to his collection of short stories.

*The Collector* is complex in form because of the use of different literary allusions that stem from different literary genres. The most prominent reference is Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. The reference is triggered by Clegg, for he lies about his name to Miranda, introducing himself as Ferdinand. Clegg is unaware that Ferdinand and Miranda are the main romantic protagonists in *The Tempest*; his use of the name is a "vile coincidence" as Miranda judges (129). It is mostly Miranda who explicitly uses the reference since Clegg's choice of the name comes from his belief that "there's something foreign and distinguished about it" and because his uncle, the only person he is emotionally attached to, calls him "Lord Ferdinand" (37). However, even Clegg's choice is not a coincidence, as it is intended by the writer. The intention, as we believe, is to draw the reader's attention to both Miranda and Clegg's rewriting of the same myth, to bring about a plurality of morality and meaning, and to subvert meaning through this plurality.

The reference's use is, thus, not necessarily similar to the original myth of Shakespeare. Although Miranda tells Clegg that "they should have called you Caliban" (62), the reader, through Clegg's confessions, knows that the reference is inaccurate since the reader sympathizes, at many times, with Clegg more than he does with Miranda. In addition to this subversion, Miranda acts more like Prospero than his daughter. She feels rather pitiful than hateful towards her captor. However, the greatest subversion lies in how Miranda misjudges the role Clegg plays. Clegg's embrace of the name 'Ferdinand' is not accidental, at least not to the writer. If we consider Shakespeare's Ferdinand from a modern feministic conception, we would relate him more to Clegg. Miranda is blind to the parallel. Ferdinand in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* sees his Miranda as the "maid" and "the goddess on whom these airs attend" (41). Another important and similar conception lies in his announcement that "if a virgin ...

I'll make you The Queen of Naples" (42). Ferdinand's definition of Miranda is Clegg's. In the second chapter, we have dealt with how Clegg sees women as two types: the 'Madonna' and the 'whore'. This Victorian conception of sexuality is inherent in Ferdinand as well. His admiration for Miranda is a result of the ability to label her as a chaste, young maiden. Fowles offers a thorough criticism to this conception through Clegg and many other male characters, yet, as we have seen in the third section of the second chapter, he does not offer a model of an alternative.

The reference to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is not just a rewriting. It might be a feminist rereading as well. This matrix of rewriting and rereading changes the meaning of the reference which makes the use of it more intertextual than allusive. The product is a new text with a plurality of meaning that accords to the different conceptions of the writer and the characters. This plurality excludes the possibility of one resolution. The main difference between using intertextuality and allusion is this particular feature. While the latter aims at finding meaning within the text, the former creates a new text which rewrites and rereads the reference.

Another less prominent reference than *The Tempest* is Jane Austen's *Emma*. The reference brings a moment of truth that Miranda finally achieves with herself. Although her first mentioning of the main character is intended to find a fantastic solution to her dilemma; she believes she can act like a matchmaker and "be like Emma and arrange a marriage for him, and with happy results. Some little Harriet Smith for him, with whom he can be mousy and sane and happy" (C 229). Miranda also confesses that her ideas are mostly silly and snobbish; however, Fowles's, through Miranda's, rereading of Austen's *Emma* brings a new light to her character. While Miranda, as Loveday states, sees "the same faults of arrogance and bossiness as Emma [and] shares Emma's virtues of self-critical honesty and capacity for development and change" (15), the main celebrated virtue is not what Austen herself

encourages and that is her ability to be “creative [and] determined to set the highest standards” (C 166). It is Emma the artist that is celebrated by Fowles and not the moral being. This transforms the text from a text of manners to a bildungsroman, subverting the main literary genre that the allusion stems from. This also approaches the reference to the intertextual than to the allusive.

The last two references are not as powerful as the understated references to Charles Perrault’s *Bluebeard* and Daniel Defoe’s fiction, mainly *Robinson Crusoe*, which affect the genre of the novel to a combination of the gothic and the realistic. *Emma* and *The Tempest* are works that Miranda reads and refers to explicitly in the novel while the style of the writer ominously approaches the less hopeful and blunt works of captivity. It approximates to the realistic through the nearly imitated style of Defoe which we find in the diary of Miranda who tells the events in the way Crusoe does. There is hopefulness that she shares with the main protagonist of *Robinson Crusoe* that Fowles comes to subvert by the end of the novel. The subversion is the result of overweighting the gothic over the realistic.

Acheson believes that even Clegg’s narrative is connected to Defoe’s style. While Miranda’s style resembles that of Crusoe, Clegg’s resembles Moll from *Moll Flanders* (14). Fowles, like Defoe, tries to unfold, through Clegg, the workings of the perverted mind of a criminal. Like Moll, Clegg blames his actions on his upbringing and the fact that he was orphaned at a very young age. He also shares with her his feelings of guilt accompanied with a self-important and detailed account of his crime as he proudly compares himself to a detective and congratulates himself on his intelligence in handling the kidnapping mission. However, the difference lies in two aspects. One is that Moll is a thief and Clegg is a killer. The second is that Moll is female and Clegg is male. Fowles describes a male perverted mind that forces a greater effect on the atmosphere of the novel. While Moll’s crimes are a pathway to find her true self, Clegg’s crimes are a way to impose and validate his existence over the existence of

another. This brings him closer to Bluebeard than to Moll and, by consequence, brings the novel closer to the gothic. Like Bluebeard, the collector and killer of his wives, Clegg starts his collection with Miranda and ends it with another 'M'. They both imprison their women in an air-raided, cave-like room. Through this analogy, Fowles is both criticizing and celebrating the masculine sexuality since "by virtue of [the book's] narrative strategies, [it] invites an almost voyeuristic interest from the reader" (Woodcock 27), making Fowles himself "a kind of Bluebeard" (28). The last chapter imprisons the narrative of Miranda, declaring the triumph of its capturer.

In spite of the detailed naturalism of Defoe that we find in Clegg and Miranda's narrative, the ending of the novel lacks the redemptive quality, which does not have to be fantastic, that is important to the genre. The prevailing qualities are gothic. The gothic is meant to parody the intended romance that Clegg's distorted mind tries to achieve. However, even the gothic is subverted to result in a constant circle of writing and re-writing as we will later illustrate.

The first element of relevance to the gothic is what David Punter refers to as "the predatory male" (62). In neo-Gothic literature, violence in sexuality is portrayed in a male collector who has certain fetishism in his relation to women who are rather objectified. We find this pattern in ancient gothic works, like *Bluebeard*, and in later works of the neo-Gothic fictions of Angela Carter. The latter rewrites *Bluebeard* and the life story of Marquis De Sade and comments on the role of the male predator in relation to the women of her time, whose role in taking part of the sadomasochistic relation with their dominator is free rather than imposed. The pattern of violence in male sexuality occurs also in Mathew Lewis' *The Monk* which has more patterns in common with *The Collector* than any other neo-Gothic work. The monk shares with Clegg a certain sexual deprivation that results in an act of violent rape. Although the monk actually rapes his victim, Clegg does in a way that defines his prudish

definition of sex. He forces Miranda into posing for his pornographic portraits but does not touch her; his onanism is as offensive as Ambrosio's act of rape, for Miranda's attempts at seducing him are frustrated in favor of this perverted imposition of power. This further exemplifies the importance of power in male sexuality. While Miranda does not mind giving in sexually to her capturer, Clegg is offended by her sexual freedom that constrains his masculine authority. Fowles re-writes the motifs of rape that have been dealt with in former neo-Gothic literature to highlight the masculine thirst for power in relation to modern feminine liberalism.

Another pattern that brings Fowles's *The Collector* closer to the gothic is claustrophobia. This pattern has been referred to in the second chapter in relation to the motif of the 'cave' which is a motif that reinforces the theme of madness. Madness and imprisonment are also common gothic themes, and Fowles's treatment of both is refreshingly innovative since the persona of Clegg does not depict the usual monster-like solipsism that most gothic protagonists portray. His psychopathic disorder creates an absence of empathy that results in an impossible communication opportunity with his opposite, Miranda. Miranda is everything Clegg is not. Her lucid, artistic, and emotional responses to the reality around her creates an even stronger barrier between herself and Clegg, for Clegg's mind works like the cave-like basement she is imprisoned in. Her tragedy lies in the forcefulness of such a contrast, for it is what makes the gap between them similar to that of the doubleness of the worlds of the real and the fantastic which "inflects Gothic through and through" (63).

Clegg's madness illustrates the irrationality with which Gothic literature is defined through. What contrasts realistic literature to the Gothic is what contrasts Miranda's character to Clegg's. It is Clegg's anomalies and his illogical and pathological views of the world that creates a coherent patterning of the Gothic world in the novel. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, writers of fiction started exploring new conceptions of human nature that depart from the sensible. A

prevailing character is madness, which is highly associated to the sinister. This relation has been criticized in modern fiction, and many contemporary writers have re-written former texts to condemn this representation. An example of such a text is the postcolonial re-writing of Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* by Jean Rhys. The mad has been given a voice. If we observe Clegg from this perspective, we are to realize that the relation of his madness to his sinister character is equally strong to the relation that has been traditionally represented in 18<sup>th</sup> century Gothic literature; however, he is still given a voice. His narrative is as equally important as that of Miranda. Another important element of re-writing is that Clegg's madness does not fall into the same category of the simple and generalized conception of the irrational; it is a studied case that represents the uniqueness of his character and defines him as Fowles's rarest free characters.<sup>6</sup>

The final element of re-writing in regards to the pattern of madness is the lack of sympathy the reader holds for the only 'rational' perspective in the novel, Miranda's. Miranda's arrogance confuses the reader's resolution in taking her stand. The sympathy the reader has for Clegg's unfortunate upbringing creates relative acceptance for his behavior, for there is a prior knowledge the reader forms of his madness, yet Miranda's snobbish ideology and her intellectual and repulsive attitudes towards the world are almost unforgivable if it were not for her death at the end of the novel. Clegg is given an equal reality. He is even more authentic as a character since Fowles speaks mostly through Miranda.

Fowles parodies the gothic in *The Collector* through the above discussed elements of re-writing the traditional patterning of the genre and through approaching the protagonist to the anti-hero of the Movement literature of Alan Sillitoe, J. D. Salinger, and John Braine. As discussed before, Fowles's aim is to criticize this genre through the character of Clegg. Miranda persuades Clegg to read *The Catcher in the Rye* in order to make him see the reality of his selfishness. What Clegg ends up seeing is that the protagonist of the novel is nothing but

a “mess” (C 217) and that he does not identify with him. Miranda sees that they both do not “fit anywhere” (217); however, what she misses in her reference to Salinger’s anti-hero is the fact that, unlike Clegg, Holden acknowledges his faults while Clegg does not see fault in his actions. He believes he is in the right and that everything he does is appropriate enough. He even believes that Miranda has been ungrateful. Clegg’s anti-heroism lies in the celebration of his pathology, and it is a celebration because he shares an equal narrative role as that of Miranda.

In addition to the pathological aspect, the protagonist’s behavior is also, as Miranda reasons later, the product of his social class and education. As this awareness grows, “the Gothic strain seems to falter, and the novel has recourse to the realist tradition” (Punter 67). Although Clegg’s attempts in isolating Miranda from the real world do not cease and the terror he inflicts continues, the relation the two share develops into an ungothicized yet “grotesque [and] inverted form [of the conventional] bourgeois domesticity” (Stephenson 21). It is Miranda’s attachment to her captor that defines their relation. This psychological condition is referred to as ‘Stockholm Syndrome’ which describes the captive’s growing emotional attachment to the captor; this brings Clegg closer to his humaneness rather than the usual gothic beastly nature we are expecting and, eventually, brings the novel closer to the real.

Fowles’s second novel, *The Magus*, is heavily referential. These references are mostly fantasies of roles the protagonist wants to play in his life. They are also the production of a great reader who is Nicholas himself. Both Conchis and Nicholas use literary and historical allusions in a way that does not account for the reader’s knowledge of them. References on, for instance, page 392-3 touch on works of *Great Expectations*, “The Pied Paper of Hamelin”, ‘Byzantine history’, the ‘Greek War of Independence’, and many others. It is impossible to create meaning based on these allusions because every page holds different citations. The text, thus, destroys its own meaning by introducing another. This also affects the novel’s patterning

which explores many sub-genres. Loveday reads the plot as social comedy, Bildungsroman, fictional autobiography, the novel of ideas, and the *roman à tiroirs* (31). The novel is heavily designed and heavily intertextual, yet the prevailing genre is romance, which we have already dealt with in the first section. That is the reason why we are to focus on Fowles's other novels and short stories than *The Magus* in this section. But one important aspect of *The Magus* should be mentioned here which is its failure to balance the prevailing genre with the allusions it uses. Fowles, as many critics believe, tries to say and to do too much in this novel and the subversion it achieves is not a designed subversion; it is a paranoid one. The paranoia is that of the author, for his artistic identity is at loss. It is only through *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Ebony Tower* that Fowles finds his artistic self and embraces his postmodern identity, which he fights against in *The Magus*.

The prevailing genre of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the historical novel. This literary genre discusses fictional events from a past period of time before the birth of the author. The novel attempts to transmit and imitate the atmosphere, social state, and manners of a certain period of history. The plot may revolve around actual biographical narratives, like in Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace* and Robert Graves's *I, Claudius*, or fictional events in an accurate historical factuality, like in Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly* and Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. It is agreed upon amongst critics that the genre is first used by Sir Walter Scott in *Waverly* in 1814. Naturally, it has developed through the development of the aesthetics of literature and so Fowles's use of the genre is different from Scott's. Actually, Fowles' revival of the genre has popularized its use in the 70's. It is through Fowles's authentication of the genre that writers like Julian Barnes, Graham Swift, and Margaret Atwood started to write what Linda Hutcheon labels as 'historiographic metafiction' which is another concept for the postmodern historical fiction. This subversive genre differs from

Scott's traditional historical novel in that it carries a self-conscious fictional undertaking of its treatment of history.

Before dealing with the prominent subversion that Fowles celebrates in his historical novel, we should not neglect that both Fowles and Scott's interest in a past period stems from the same need, which is to understand the social condition of their own time. Both writers choose a period of history that precedes their own with a gap of one century. That particular point in history marks a rebellious attitude towards the social conditions the characters, or the real people of that time, are exposed to; "characters are both shaped by and attempt to escape from conflictual forces of their time" (Finney 90). The reason behind choosing a 'conflictual' period of time lies in the writers' fascination with the characters' different extremities which define an old age and an upcoming one. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, these extremities best show in the opposite characters of Mrs. Poulteney and Sarah. One represents the sternness of her dying Victorian age and the other represents the new independent role of the 20<sup>th</sup> century woman. The change is not only illustrated by these two characters. Other historical ideologies and developments further demonstrate a certain unwanted, yet inevitable, progress that revolutionizes and defines a very vital period of time and introduces another.

The major historical pointers of the year chosen by Fowles to position his fictional world in, which is 1867, define the main themes of the novel. The year witnessed the publication of Marx's *Das Kapital* which is dedicated to Darwin, another influential figure in the novel. Marx's prediction of the fading of the bourgeoisie and its replacement with the fitter social species, the working and the entrepreneurial classes, is a prominent theme in the novel.<sup>7</sup> This theme is better illustrated with the rise of Mr. Freeman and the fall of Charles. The same year allowed workers to vote. It also witnessed an important step towards the history of women's liberation. Although John Stuart Mill failed at persuading the parliament to allow women such an advantage, the attempt triggered others after him to pursue the action which

led to the formation of leading social activists at that time. The theme of rising female freedom and emancipation is present in the novel through the character of Sarah and her choice of the notorious artistic milieu, the Pre-Raphaelites, over marriage.

In addition to these historical pointers, Fowles begins every chapter with an epigraph that belongs to writers of that period of time, among them writers of non-fiction. The very first epigraph introduces the main protagonist of the novel. Fowles chooses a passage from Thomas Hardy's "The Riddle" which describes a mysterious woman gazing out to the sea. The description of this woman in the poem matches Charles's first impressions of Sarah. Beginning the novel with Hardy adds another pointer to the three mentioned above. The year 1867 signals an important biographical event in the life of Hardy, his relation to his cousin Tryphena, which revolutionized his literary career.

The intertextual matrix emphasizes and shapes the genre. Fictional and non-fictional epigraphs of writers like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and many others create a factual historical context to the fictional world Fowles constructs. Chapter 28 is mostly based on a French text that describes the story of the trial of a French lieutenant called Emile de la Roncière at that time. The inclusion of the text adds meaning to Sarah's story, whose name links her to another French lieutenant of a similar reputation. The story of de la Rencière is made to accuse Sarah over the infamous French lieutenant who abandons her before she meets Charles. It is Dr Grogan who makes the link and persuades Charles to see Sarah as rather the designer of her own predicament. Sarah, in Dr Grogan's opinion, intends to entangle Charles the same way the daughter of Baron de Morell entangled de la Rencière. The latter intended on assaulting his enemy's daughter by sneaking into her room late at night. Although he did break into her room, the details that were mentioned by the victim were exaggerated. Insulting letters followed. After the sentence of de la Rencière, the letters appeared to be written excellently, a linguistic skill that the lieutenant lacked. It had been later

proved that the lieutenant was not the one who wrote them. It was Marie de Morell herself who designed the whole action. It was only too later when it was understood that she suffered from a hysterical illness and was found guilty. This direct reference is added to create more mystery around the persona of Sarah. The reader, following Charles's realizations and presumptions, starts suspecting Sarah's case. The reader learns that Sarah's story turns out to be a work of fiction and she does play on Charles the same deception Marie plays on the French lieutenant. However, the reader also learns that Sarah's intention is not attention but freedom. We are deceived by this allusion, for the reference adds meaning to finally subvert it. It also makes the historical textualization less faithful and more authentic in the sense that it refreshes Fowles's rewriting of the historical novel.

Other faithful references are the setting and Hardy's mysterious female protagonists. The setting is inspired by Austen's romanticizing of Lyme in her *Persuasion*. Sarah's persona is inspired by many of Hardy's protagonists. She shares with Eustacia Yye her connection with water. She also reads to an elderly. However, her connection to the obscure Sue Bridehead is more prominent. They are both, together with Tess, markedly sexualized into distant others for the men in the novel. The slight difference lies in Sarah's independent choice to deceive Charles into her false sexual submission. We are referring to it as 'slight' because Fowles's intention was not to free Sarah at first. As we have already mentioned in an earlier chapter, Fowles had revised his first version when his wife disapproved the happy ending that joins Charles and Sarah together, making Sarah resemble the conventional Victorian woman rather than the New Woman.

Fowles's use of many intertextual techniques in his first historical novel results in an anachronistic model of the genre. This anachronism is what defines his postmodernist identity. He does not simply imitate writers of the Victorian age. His aim, as he writes in "Notes on an Unfinished novel", is not "to write something one of the Victorian novelists forgot to write,

but perhaps something one of them failed to write” (W 15). Fowles’s aim is not plain pastiche, which is why he bases his account of the historical period on the particular historical pointers mentioned above. His emphasis on cultural evolution and an early feminist awareness, together with the rejection of God, are complementary to one particular important theme that he celebrates in his early fiction, existential freedom. In other words, by writing this novel, he is “trying to show an existentialist awareness before it was chronologically possible” (17). The rebellious transition that the novel covers makes the discussion of the theme add an agreeable position to the role of the implemented anachronism which subverts the traditional historical novel and revives it at the same time. Fowles does bring the genre into popular use with his technique, making it “a highly intellectual work of fiction that is also a highly popular work of fiction” (Brantlinger, et al. 339). The reason for the popularity of the work might not be the inclusion of the intellectual and the historical, nor is it because of Fowles’s “knowledge of fictional esthetics” (339); it is rather Fowles’s ability to portray the restlessness of an age that resembles the restlessness the world experiences in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Fowles portrays a timeless human condition that even the Victorians failed to convey. The existential crisis Charles goes through and Sarah’s unconventional beliefs do not seem so out of place to a contemporary reader.

On the thematic level, sexuality and religion have been dealt with in a critical manner that adds a new perspective to the history of the period. Loveday disagrees with this claim. He believes that Fowles fails in reconciling agnosticism and freedom of sexuality with the story. His attempt ends up in lamenting the loss of God rather than celebrating it as he intends. Loveday gives the example of chapter 48 which is rather “steeped, not in agnosticism, but in religiosity” (78). The reason lies in Charles’s prayer to Christ, instead of the omnipotent God, and the many religious metaphors that the chapter includes. What Loveday misses is that the chapter also speaks of ‘uncrucifying’ Christ; Christ is but a symbol of a former version of

Charles himself. The uncrucifixion of Christ symbolizes the freedom of Charles from established religion. Even if Loveday reads Fowles's treatment of the matter as sympathetic to Charles's lamentation of the loss of God and the embrace of freedom, this lamentation is necessary, for Fowles is trying to reconcile religion with existentialism since he has to contextualize the novel to its proper historical period. The narrator is after all a figure of both, the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Also, the transition from the Victorian to the modern time has to have a depressive rather than a celebrated note. In chapter one, we have mentioned in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* how the main character announces the death of God in a rather regretful tone. Both Charles and Zarathustra are at loss here, for they do not know yet the alternative to a long-lasting established religion that has offered meaning. Sartre also speaks of existential anguish that comes along the decision to free oneself from tradition.

The same thing can be said about the guilt that accompanies the love-making that Charles and Sarah share. Both characters have had a rather strict definition of what is sexually appropriate. Prudishness has defined their lives, especially that of Sarah, being a woman. Their action is already an act of defiant freedom in the face of their Victorian upbringing. Fowles's treatment of sexuality is more daring than even the writings of Thomas Hardy, whom Fowles considers as the Victorian writer who is the most open about the topic, do not encompass its boldness. We are not simply referring to the scene where Sarah and Charles consummate their love here; we are also referring to the narrator's comments about Sarah's possible homosexuality, in addition to Ernestina's sexual thoughts.

In addition to subversion on the thematic level, Fowles subverts the genre using other formal techniques that are irrelevant to the Victorian novel. Even when the writer includes epigraphs from the 19<sup>th</sup> century literature and imitates the style of its writers, he uses vocabulary and narrative techniques relevant to his age. Chapter 17, for instance, uses words and phrases from the 19<sup>th</sup> and late 20<sup>th</sup> centuries:

According to Ernestina, there were far more gooseberries than humans patiently, because gossipingly, waiting for the concert to begin. Every decade invents such a useful noun-and-epithet; in the 1860s ‘gooseberry’ meant ‘all that is dreary and old-fashioned’; today Ernestina would have called those worthy concert-goers square ... which was certainly Mrs. Tomkins’s shape, at least from the back. (126)

‘Square’ is a modern English slang for the same Victorian slang, ‘gooseberry’. The narrator is explaining Ernestina’s use with a comic tone that makes the transition from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 20<sup>th</sup> rather smooth, tolerable, and even pleasant for the reader. This also brings up a consciousness of the fictionality of the work that is rather unusual to the Victorian aestheticism. Although the narrator is omniscient, which is more popular in 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction, the persona of this narrator is meant to parody this omniscience. Fowles’s use of the metafictional technique, as discussed in the former chapter, is meant to distinguish him from his ancestors and to criticize them. The god-like knowingness and authority that the omniscient narrator assumes to possess crumble away into what Roland Barthes calls the ‘death of the author’, for when the narrator “ordered [Charles] to walk straight back to Lyme Regis ... he did not; he gratuitously turned and went down to the Dairy” (*FLW* 98). In addition to undermining the authority of the author, the technique is meant to criticize history as a factual medium of time; this does not exclude history as unreal “but that it consists of fallible, provisional, relative sets of interpretations of a past to which we have no unmediated, complete access” (Holmes 229). There are always gaps left in the history of the human condition which allow further interpretation and which are not objective and absolute. The strongest example lies in Sarah and Charles’s reactions to that history and the freedom, whether on the thematic or the aesthetic level, they are allowed by their writer. Another example is the narrator’s treatment of sexuality as discussed above.

The three endings that Fowles proposes are also another form of subversion. The first and second endings, according to Onega, conform to the traditional Victorian close and happy ending. Onega sees the first as conforming “to Jane Austen’s notion of ‘common sense’” while the second, where Charles is reunited with Sarah instead of Ernestina, “shows a triumph of Austen’s ‘sensibility’ over common sense (27). It is in the third ending, in addition to the postmodern multiplicity, that the subversion lies. It is called by many as the triumphant existentialist ending which presents Charles with more individuality than the other endings. Charles develops an awareness that is inexistent in the representation of a past Victorian character. However, it is not impossible to imagine that such a personality existed, especially at an age “where the great iron structures of their philosophies, religions, and social stratifications were already beginning to look dangerously corroded to the perspicacious” (W 18). The possibility was never represented because it had not been foreseen. Only an accurate futuristic perspective can make such a representation conceptualized and labeled. The label is ‘existential awareness’.

Fowles’s use of intertextuality and its relevance to the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century creates another form of awareness of the text’s fictionality. His extensive use of double intertextuality has two reasons. The first is to show certain “distrust of a unified self” and simply experiment (Finney 96). The second lies in making the novel relevant to his time even when it deals with a lost past. He writes in “Notes on an Unfinished Novel” that “*a novel is something new. It must have relevance to the writer’s now – so don’t ever pretend you live in 1867; or make sure that the reader knows it’s a pretence*” (W 15). Including texts from the Victorian literature, in addition to imitating the style of the Victorian writers, and adding a modern perspective of how the novel is structured in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century make the novel relevant to ‘the writer’s now’ rather to the Victorian period. The inclusion of the modern standpoint has often been misinterpreted as Fowles looking down on his Victorian ancestors (Finney 96). This claim can

easily be debunked, for, as we have seen in the first section, Fowles's attempt at imitation and parody is to challenge his artistic ancestors who have exhausted artistic authenticity in terms of bringing something 'new' to the table. This shows in how the narrator envies "our ancestors' isolation" (*FLW* 129).

'The Ebony Tower' is not the original title to Fowles's only collection of short stories. The title itself holds an intertextual significance that alludes to Sainte-Beuve's use of the term 'ivory tower' which describes Alfred de Vigny's, the romantic poet, exile "to a '*tour d'ivoire*' of introspection, in contrast with the more socially engaged Victor Hugo" ("*The Ebony Tower and the Search for Meaning*" 132). This does not mean that the collection is a sort of an ivory tower. On the contrary, the use of the ebony tower is meant to give an alternative to the artist's sense of exile from the world to a solipsistic absurdism of artistic play. Here lies the relation of the original title, which is 'variation', to the 'ebony tower'. 'Variation' is meant to describe Fowles's use of "certain themes in previous books ... and in methods of narrative presentation" (*ET* 117), which makes the 'ebony tower' a variation of the 'ivory tower'. This is further proved by Breasley's use of the term to point out that it describes the artistic productions of artists who are "scared to be clear" (50). This raises a question that has not been answered by critics before: why would Fowles entitle his collection with a variation of a way of representation that is rather condemned by him and Breasley?

The first answer lies in that 'variation' is not pure 'imitation' or even 'borrowing' from former themes and narrative structures of Fowles's early novels. It is a sort of criticism and commentary on these themes. *The Ebony Tower* is a collection that addresses criticism of the 'ivory tower' through the use of an 'ebony tower'. The latter does not represent the engaging artist nor the secluded one. It offers a balance between the two. The evidence for this lies in Breasley's comparison of his *Moon-hunt* to Uccello's *Night Hunt*. The former is a signifying parody of the latter. It conveys meaning through the parody it implements. The parody also

speaks of the individual's struggle, mainly the modern artist's. The struggle lies in finding his place in the world of artistic creation which enables him to represent reality in a way that challenges and acknowledges his ancestors; Williams realizes the difference between the two paintings and sees a certain "homage and a kind of thumbed nose to a very old tradition" (23). This further illustrates the thematic change that Fowles announces in his collection. While in his former novels he deals with existential freedom as a main theme, in *The Ebony Tower* his interest shifts to answering what fiction is about.

However, it might also mean that Fowles embraces the unclearness that his art comprises. In here lies the second answer, which is the most probable, to our question. It is the most probable because most critics focus on Fowles's implication of a plurality of meaning that resists decoding and adds more mystery to his texts through subversion. Mystery is not necessarily what Williams refers to as "abstraction", and Breasley daringly condemns it as the "[g]reatest betrayal in the history of art" (45). Abstraction in arts stirs no strong feelings in the audience and the created pieces, like those of Williams, "went well on walls that had to be lived with" (21) which makes them rather decorative. William works for money and he paints what sells; his role as a family man limits his creative scope. He is better as a critic than an artist, making him better with words than Breasley, who is a better artist.

Breasley despises what William as an artist represents. What is significant here is that Breasley is speaking for Fowles. Thus, his opinion and his art are promoted; however, that does not necessarily say much on Fowles's work. His work might resemble Williams's as we shall discover. Breasley's work is not realistic, yet it is still not abstract. Its aim is not decorative, for it does represent and stir a certain feeling in the audience even when it parodies and subverts. We can see that Breasley shares this representational value, and plurality of meaning, with Fowles. Fowles's works, mainly *The Magus*, is meaningless because it holds multiples meanings, but what is rather important about the work is how it evokes a coherent

psychological response rather than a coherent rational answer to its dream-like nature. While Williams's work is pure design, Breasley's tackles "a deeply personal response to a visual stimulus" (Loveday 91).

Fowles's work does resemble Breasley's, yet they both fear to be clear, even when it is Williams only who is openly accused of this obscurity. Fowles's short stories hold a plurality of meanings and genres that are constantly subverted. An example for this is how wordiness is condemned in the first short story through Williams's superior mastery of language over Breasley's. Breasley is less expressive in words, but he masters the life of the artist in a way that makes Williams regret his life choices at the end of the short story. In "Poor Koko", the narrator is the one who is more expressive. The burglar is rather inarticulate. Fowles sees that expressiveness and articulateness are always a better option, although not the best in the case of the artist, than inarticulateness and ignorance put together. Although many critics believe that the translated Cornish epigraph set by Fowles at the end of the story "is almost unintelligible" ("*The Ebony Tower and the Search for Meaning*" 134), we find it symbolic of the argument we have laid. "Too long a tongue, too short a hand; / But tongueless man has lost his hand" (*ET* 184) shows that the narrator is articulate but weak and that the burglar is both inarticulate and weak.

Although the epigraph might be intelligible, the story itself is not, making it closer to the conception of the ebony tower according to Breasley. The narrator ends up pondering on many possibilities on why the burglar chooses to burn his book and ends up with no answer. In spite of the logical arguments offered to solve the dilemma, the reader is led nowhere close to a definite meaning. Even when the reader is invited for a search for meaning using "a character who is presented as a reader critic figure" ("*The Ebony Tower and the Search for Meaning*" 134), his mission is constantly frustrated and subverted. The reason for this subversion is to draw attention to the text's fictionality and how different it is from reality.

An example for a reader-character figure who guides, presumably, the reader's quest for meaning is the detective Michael Jennings in "The Enigma", which begins as a detective story with Jennings seeking answers for the disappearance of John Marcus Fielding. Many answers are offered. The most probable one is suicide, which is Isobel's, his son's former girlfriend, theory. Fielding's daughter, Caroline, believes that he might have joined a monastery at Mount Athos; her claims is founded on her belief that "he was more complicated 'than we all ever realized'" (*ET* 216). Fielding's complex character is another added technique to criticize Jennings's detective mind and its purpose of quantifying knowledge and human condition. The ultimate subversion of the detective genre lies in Jennings's acceptance of Isobel's theory that supports a rather imaginative approach to reality, making reality resemble fiction rather than the opposite. Isobel imagines that Fielding goes through existential anguish and decides to embrace freedom and walk out on his shallow life of pretence. She pushes Jennings to imagine that Fielding is a character in a novel to picture a different scenario from the quantifiable ones. What is interesting here is that Fowles usually writes about what is suppose to happen to Fielding, yet here we are faced with the workings of the mind of someone who is in Fowles's own position and not his character. The reader becomes a writer in this case, for we join Isobel in writing the fate of Fielding, since it is not absolute that he chose that path. Fowles allows us to observe the author's self and its product, which subverts our role as readers from the detective one to the creative one.

Ultimately, the ending of the story focuses on the new couple, Jennings and Isobel, rather than the promoted center of the plot, which is solving the mystery of the disappearance of Fieldings; thus, it offers no meaning. The absurd has prevailed in most of Fowles's short stories, yet "Poor Koko" and "The Enigma" forcefully support what Fowles conceptualizes as "black proof of an ultimate shirking of creative responsibility" (117), which is rather shared with the reader. The subversion is rather that of any epistemological end, resulting in a

triumph of the ontological and the postmodernist, which approximates Fowles to the ‘ebony tower’ that Breasley preaches against.

The least lucid story in the collection is “The Cloud”. Catherine’s disappearance at the end of the story reminds us of Fielding’s. In both, there is a speculation of suicide, yet it is not confirmed. The linguistic signs that the narrators offers indicate her suicide: “Catherine lies, composing and decomposed, writing and written” (287). This argument is Vipond’s and not ours. Vipond uses some of the linguistic signals the narrator uses to conclude that Catherine “is left suspended forever in an endlessly anachronistic present” (“*The Ebony Tower and the Search for Meaning*” 141). The aim lies in promoting mystery which adds to the pleasure of the text experienced by the reader. Nevertheless, we believe that these indications might be wrong, for Fowles includes the thoughts of Roland Barthes in the short story to comment on how linguistic signs and signals may fail to convey meaning, which might be the case for the linguistic signals that the narrator uses. This adds to the plurality of meaning that Fowles’s fiction consciously and unconsciously promotes.

In his collection of short stories, Fowles’ implications of Barthes’s theories make his approach to this plurality rather conscious, for irony is the key to approaching the main theme of the collection, which is the nature of fiction. The question of ‘what fiction is’ is also left unanswered. Most critics agree that the ebony tower is a variation of the ivory tower; the latter aims at an epistemological end represented in modernistic arts while the former aims at subverting unity and celebrating doubleness and plurality of meaning.<sup>8</sup>

It is obvious that Fowles finally embraces his postmodernist persona here, which he later confesses in several interviews. Our analysis of his earlier novels, which he claims that they aim at finding meaning through the existential missions that his protagonists go through, shows that they also foster such a plurality through intertextuality and subversion of multiple subgenres, which contradicts his thematic aims; existentialism is about finding meaning after

all. Fowles's intertextual techniques make his texts 'new'. This does not exclude meaning altogether; these techniques subvert meaning through its plurality, but different meanings are offered nevertheless. The aim is creating a new role for the modern reader who is supposed to actively participate in the reading and the writing of the text. However, it is still the writer who holds the keys for power, or what Lance St John Butler calls "his new-found freedom to play" (72).

### Conclusion

Fowles's use of romance comes in a form of parody that subverts it altogether. The aim of its use lies in his admiration for a lost literary past, yet that past cannot be imitated without re-appropriation. The reasons are two. The first lies in the impossibility of the modern reader to relate to such a representation; for instance, the pattern of the lack of communication is usually reconciled in traditional romance, yet Fowles adds a modern thematic twist that promotes a failure of communication that endorses a certain ontological end. The second reason lies in Fowles's artistic urge to distinguish himself as a writer from his ancestors. Fowles has to 'make it new' in the sense that he has to defy labelness and to survive under the rich legacy of his forbearers. Fowles is thus postmodernist par excellence since his use of parody does not restrict him to one genre. He experiments with devices of narrative unreliability, metafiction, open ending, and intertextuality to authenticate the novel rather than to parody one genre.

Metafiction is a device that brings the reader's awareness to the constructedness of the text. Fowles uses this technique in most of his fictions. The claimed aim is to free his readers and characters by devaluing his authorial figure as God. However, the role of the author, along with his surrogates, is to further strengthen his creative power. While Fowles pretends to step back and allow Nicholas his freedom, Conchis serves as an alternative power figure to control him. The same happens to Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The narrator's

pronouncement of the artificiality of the world he creates comes at crucial moments of freedom declaration and important insights to his characters' minds. The reason for this is to create mystery in the text. While he pretends that he respects his characters' privacies, the real aim lies in adding an ontological perspective which rather empowers him further.

Mystery is key to understanding Fowles's approach to reality. His aesthetic persona is summed up in using devices, such as intertextuality, that subvert multiple constructed meanings which generate plurality rather than unity. This guarantees him a place that separates him from his modernist forbearers and allows him an authenticity that runs against his artistic principles that value epistemology. However, the ontological triumph that characterizes his postmodern texts represents the journey of the contemporary artist that lives under the shadow of an exhausted heritage. What Fowles portrays is another important timeless human condition, which is that of the artist.

## Notes

1. Check page 14 and 15 in *The Romances of John Fowles* to see Loveday's analysis of the pattern of circularity in *The Collector*.

2. The anti-domaine is a concept we have already introduced in the first section of the third chapter.

3. These motifs are mentioned by Loveday in relation to "Eliduc" on page 86 and in relation to "The Ebony Tower" on page 88. The recurrent motifs, which are seven, show how Fowles intertwines his other short stories with "Eliduc". The subversion indicates an implementation of an intentional parody.

4. The narrative structure has been exhaustively dealt with in the second chapter. The first section deals with that of Clegg and the second with Miranda's. The reason why we have analyzed their styles in these two sections (which mainly focus on the thematic aspects of the book) is to analyze their characters accordingly.

5. In Fowles's time of writing, the 60's and 70's, postmodernism was not yet critically acclaimed. It is only in an interview with Katharina Gänsbauer in 1999 that he finally acknowledges the label.

6. Freedom of character has been dealt with in the last section of the third chapter. Clegg does not speak for Fowles. Fowles's didacticism reveals itself in Miranda rather than Clegg.

7. The theme of cultural evolution figures in the third chapter. Fowles authenticates it further by relating cultural evolution to existential authenticity which is among the highlights of the novel.

8. It is Catherine Tarbox who first aligns the ivory tower with modernism and the ebony tower with postmodernism. You can check this reference, and further explanation, in the notes of Vipond's article, "*The Ebony Tower and the Search for Meaning*", on page 144.

## General Conclusion

The Many, according to Fowles, is a hopeless group of existentially inauthentic individuals. The best example for a specific model is Clegg. Clegg is denied the choice to take a different path than what his obsessive self dictates on him. The reason he belongs to the Many is indeed incorrigible, since it is pathological, and so there is no hope for him to change. Mrs. Poulteney suffers from a similar obsessive and conformist pathology. Her reverence for the societal rules of the Victorian age makes of any attempt to teach her out of her way absurd. What characterizes this group of individuals is the inability to see the importance of the others' right to freedom. Although Fowles tries to make Clegg the victim of his social background and his lack of education, his character shows a psychological imbalance that is the result of emotional immaturity. Clegg is also to be blamed for his inability to free himself from the constraints that define him. He has succumbed to his own obsessive thirst for power through his art of collecting. His art, collecting women (which has been developed out of collecting butterflies), provides him with a sense of being. Since he does not fit in any social group, he chooses to 'inauthentically' stand out in an attempt to deny his nemo, which is another important Fowlesian concept.

The nemo is state of "nobodiness" (A 47), as Fowles defines it, which exists with the existence of civilization and which the individual experiences when facing an existential crisis. Defying the nemo usually comes in two different ways: to conform and to conflict. In here lies the difference between Clegg and Mrs. Poulteney; while the latter conforms, the former conflicts. Both ways are described as inauthentic by Fowles. Mrs. Poulteney's approach is inauthentic because she finds in religion and tradition a sense of self-definition that frees her from her sense of worthlessness. Her only way to escape being a 'nobody' is to become a 'somebody' in a specific social group, even when the moral values of that group deny her her individualism. Clegg's approach is inauthentic because he wants to stand out

from the crowd and become a distinguished outsider. The aim is to have power, which is a type of defense mechanism that guarantees his survival. This approach denies the freedom of other individuals. Clegg's embrace of absolute freedom is a result of some psychological complexes rather than the need to be free and choose for oneself. His conception of freedom is not existential. The right approach to defy the nemo is to acknowledge it and accept its temporary subordination to the individual self until the latter gradually defines itself. This requires intellectual and emotional intelligence that only potential members of the Few possess.

What the Many lacks is the potentiality to be a member of the Few. Those with the potentiality do not belong to the Many even when they are existentially inauthentic; they belong to what Fowles calls the elect, or what we have conceptualized as the 'potential Few'. However, Fowles denies this potentiality in Ernestina and Sam, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and the burglar, in "Poor Koko". While Clegg and Mrs Poulteney share a pathological conformity to a certain model in their minds, Ernestina, Sam, and the burglar are intelligent individuals who have been disempowered by the narrator because they have to serve as rivals to the model protagonists of Fowles's fiction. In here lies Fowles's first artistic failure.

There are two types of inauthentic individuals: the Many and the potential Few. Before reaching the authentic self, Fowles's main existential protagonists, the potential Few, go through self-actualizing journeys that rid them of the first immature personal features that condemn them as inauthentic, yet their inauthenticity is different from the Many's in a very crucial way that adds another definition to Fowles's conception of inauthenticity.

Miranda's flaws are her condescendence and the use of G.P.'s perspective on art and life to understand a complex human fellow. Her idealization of G.P. is similar to Clegg's idealization of her. Her understanding of Clegg stems from her readings rather than from an

actual human interaction. He is Caliban from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and so her role is that of Prospero. Fowles's potential Few share this perspective on life, which grants them the role of fictional heroes rather than their own true selves. Their destined mission is to free themselves from these roles. Nicholas Urfe shares Miranda's condescending air and her fondness for role playing. Nicholas possesses a rather condemning masculine trait which is the inability to emotionally attach himself to another individual. Like Clegg, yet not in the same obsessive manner, Nicholas misunderstands existential freedom for sexual indulgence and promiscuity. His selfishness is thought of as a virtue that would protect the solitary melancholic aesthete in him from emotional involvement, so he wears symbolic masks to change his self from one lover to another with each woman he meets. These masks preserve his freedom and give him a broad understanding of his world. He thinks of life as simple and contrived, and here lies his second flaw. Both Nicholas and Miranda literalize reality into fiction by imposing on themselves and on the people they encounter fictional roles that help them find meaning in their lives. Here lies the flaw of the inauthentic potential Few: the recognition of a superior position in society which allows the liberty to control instead of the ability to free.

Williams, in "The Ebony Tower", shares with Nicholas the same incapacity for creating good art and for emotional attachment. His domestic life is but a cover up for the fear to be free. In here lies the very first contradiction in the characters of the potential Few; Williams's artistic self is celebrated for embracing absolute freedom over Nicholas's. The latter is condemned for his aesthetic and selfish perspective of life and honored for finally choosing morality, which is rather imposed on him by his mentor and the writer. However, Nicholas does not have the same powerful artistic potential as Williams. Nicholas is more suited as an intellectual than as an artist. Williams, in contrast, can become a great artist, and absolute freedom to an artist is vital in invigorating his creative self. Thus, a good artist is not

necessarily a moral one; the question that remains to be answered is whether his art promotes morality or not.

Whether the potential Few choose morality or freedom, they are not condemned. The reason behind the choice should be honesty. The decision has to express one's true self and not the other's conception of that self. Miranda and Williams have the potential, yet they have failed. Miranda does because she dies before becoming her true self; Williams does because he does not embrace his existential anguish and accepts the self that has been imposed on him.

Fowles's inauthentic characters encompass the Many, who are represented in the psychopaths and the unbending conformists, and the potential Few, who have not seen through their emotional immaturity, but they possess the intelligence and the willingness to change. That means, in Sartre's jargon, they are not only the group of individuals who reside within their 'in-itself's'; they are even those who have the ability to change, yet their emotional immaturity hinders their already unconformist personae to develop. According to Fowles, freedom from selfishness is as important as freedom from convention to achieve the highest state of authenticity, which is the 'aristos'.

The feminine authenticates, for it represents the spawning power to gain emotional maturity. Fowles's female protagonists are nothing but powerful tools; they are also the least free characters in his fiction. Although he believes that the masculine is inferior to the feminine in that the latter is the principle which is responsible for generating the creative over the rational and which also has more capacity to bring about progress, since it has an understanding for human nature, Fowles rather finds in women a background to the art created by his male artists. His female characters are inarticulate muses at the disposal of their articulate and expressive male artists. Most of Fowles's great artists, who also serve as magi, are male. Miranda in *The Collector* is the object of art of both Clegg and G.P. Clegg uses photography to debase her further – and in Clegg's case, Fowles is condemning the art of

photography as 'dead' since it possesses the masculine character of 'having' rather than 'being'. G.P.'s more alive and expressive art, painting, is rather celebrated by Fowles, yet it also uses women as models that stir his creative self through their mystery and sexuality. Fowles makes us understand, through his less celebrated male characters and artists, that possessing and collecting are abominable masculine qualities that need a feminine ingredient to rid their artistic outcome from its obsessive approach to life. He expresses this view through his mentors, his most celebrated male characters who serve as teachers in his fiction, and so we are to better judge his approach through them. Fowles, like his mentors, is a collector. He classifies his female characters into a recurrent rigid category of a female model, which is the *princesse lointaine*.

The *princesse lointaine* is an aloof inscrutable female that is powerful in the sense that she is the source of mystery to the artist. She is never the construer of mystery. Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, who is the only female mentor in his fiction, has a less powerful role than her male counterparts. Although the narrator pretends that he cannot read her mind to undermine his narratorial role and empower his characters, the real reason for the lack of interference lies in his inability to know her mind. Her power is subverted by drawing the reader's attention to her fictionality at her most crucial moments of artistic powers in the novel. Her inarticularity and open sexuality are celebrated, yet they are put into sharp contrast to the masculine intellectualism that Charles and Dr Grogan share. Her story telling talents are undermined by the intrusion of the narrator and his use of the metafictional technique and so, unlike Nicholas in *The Magus*, she is 'written' rather than the 'writer'. Sarah, like all of Fowles's female characters, is a source of power to the narrator and other artists in the novel.

Fowles's idealizes his female characters instead of presenting them as real and equal, in terms of *variant verisimilitudes*, to his male characters. As a result of this idealization, only one model of women is present in his fiction. This model is the *princesse lointaine* who serves

as a muse in the life of his male artists or would-be artists. Thus, the feminine attributes that Fowles thinks of as superior to the masculine are potent as long as they serve and teach the male artist. According to Fowles's own conception, he is a collector. He 'collects' women into one model and so his art lacks a very important authenticating aspect, that of 'being' instead of 'having'. This is not exclusive to his representation of women, although this particular representation is rather radical in comparison to the representation of other male characters of his fiction.

What is most exclusively original in Fowles's conception of authenticity is not authenticity in itself; it is the journey towards that authenticity. Our use of the word 'exclusive' is not arbitrary or vainly complimentary; it is backed with evidence from an aesthetic mastery of the most important themes that embody the means to achieve full membership to the Few. The means towards existential authenticity suggested by Fowles in his fiction are quite unconventional, in the sense that they are not referred to by any other existentialist, but equally intelligent. Fowles uses the right aesthetic techniques and different themes in his fiction to tackle the means to achieving existential freedom. Through hazard, evolution, and the domaine, Fowles creates different dilemmas and different solutions for his initiates to achieve authenticity, which serves as a rewriting to Sartre's definition of freedom that is more concrete.

Through hazard, which is summed up in the working powers of chance rather than the controlling divinity, Fowles's initiates experience freedom of choice and are guided solely by their own wills. There are exceptions, like in Miranda's case, yet even these exceptions teach the initiate about the importance of hazard over a controlling god; Clegg serves as a god in Miranda's short existential experience, yet without his brutal limiting power, Miranda would not have achieved the knowledge and importance of freedom. Fowles uses hazard as a technique to teach his initiates about the importance of the present over the past and the future.

Most of his potential Few have a futuristic perspective on life, denying the value of the current time where hazard occurs and defines that perspective. His Many live in the past rather than the future, embracing a rigid conventionality that runs against both the present and the future. Fowles's most original discussion lies in integrating hazard with evolution in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Fowles promotes a horizontal reading of evolution where human beings are not the ultimate goal. The latter is called vertical evolution. The reason for Fowles's refusal to use vertical evolution lies in its affinity with the divine project in creating man and controlling the course of all changes. Horizontal evolution relies on hazard, and so man is not its end.

Fowles's conception of evolution is suitable for the historical novel he weaves, which calls for a cultural evolution rather than an anthropological one. Through his Victorian characters, Fowles analyzes the surviving cultural features inherited from their ancestors and those adopted from the environment through chance to decide on the survival of these genetics to the next generation. What is more intriguing in the analysis is the possibility of intersecting the surviving culture with the existentially authentic characters. Although there are only two cases of intersection, the other characters who survive offer an intelligent and concrete example of cultural selection through history. Karl Marx's argument of the survival of the lower class and emergence of entrepreneurship instead of the nobility is embodied in the survival of Sam and Mr. Freeman and the dead of Charles's title as a gentleman. However, Charles and Sarah survive culturally when they choose freely to be together. Sarah's modern and precedent feminist values change the course of Charles's life and increase his possible survival. Sarah and Charles are the only exemplars of cultural survival and existential freedom's reconciliation in the novel. Their intellectual capacities and their passion for freedom, and the product of their union in their daughter, guarantee their cultural supremacy over that of the other characters in the novel.

The last means to existential freedom is the *domaine*. It is best illustrated in *The Magus*. The reason lies in portraying Fowles's experiences in Greece through Nicholas. The *domaine* is the result of a hazardous change in the life of the initiate through his experience of place and space. The *domaine* is an undefined space of natural origin that rejuvenates the initiate's sense of being by annihilating all that defines him before this new experience of space. It also teaches him about the significance of the present over the future by offering a utopian-like experience that draws attention to the initiate's immaturity. This experience must be temporary, for there is one type of disadvantage to absolute freedom, which is self-centeredness. This brings existential freedom into an ethical test. Unlimited freedom coexists with selfishness and immaturity. The *domaine* teaches its initiates, among them Nicholas, Charles, and Williams, that real existential freedom should not be mistaken for selfishness; it stems from the knowledge of one's true being in the mundane, rather than the fantastic, universe.

The product of this freedom, which is supposed to be a concrete definition of existential authenticity, is ontological. The result of the journey taken by the initiate is usually another starting point of bafflement. When the potential Few are finally pushed forward by hazard, they are guided by a god-like figure who is present in all Fowles's works of fiction and who helps them evolve into liberal, culture-free individuals. This figure is mostly referred to as the mentor or the magus. Thus, hazard takes its initiates back to a world with a controlling god. All the initiates meet a magus who is already a member of the Few and who guides them to choose authentically. Therefore, Fowles repeats the same pattern that puts the reality he represents into the same existentially inauthentic universe of convention. This convention is symbolic of the religious one that Sartre and Camus argue against. The first counter argument that comes into mind is the necessity of representing a defining model of an official member of the Few. The mentor might offer such a concrete definition that our

research centers on. However, our analysis of these magi offers no tangible conceptualization. They are distant and unreachable preachers that resemble Fowles in *The Aristos*. The reader relates more to the initiate, the potential Few, than to his mentor. This makes our analysis of existential authenticity associated to the developing character rather than the mature one because what we know about the mentors is nothing but a set of dictating morals of life and art and never any material behavioral model that would make the meaning of existential authenticity concrete.

The developing characters, among them Nicholas and Charles, achieve different types of freedom and conflicting conceptions of what is authentic. Nicholas is made to understand that absolute freedom is unadvisable and that freedom comes with an obligation towards the other. He is traumatized, although that is not the initial intention of Fowles, into choosing the mundane Alison over the aloof Julie. Charles is to choose his freedom over his duty and is supposed to choose the aloof and mysterious Sarah over the conventional Ernestina. Williams is condemned for choosing duty over absolute freedom. The contradiction is explained with the nature of Williams as an artist. Absolute freedom for an artist is necessary, however immoral it might be. Nicholas is not an artist, so that freedom needs to be moderated. Another contradiction lies in Sarah's choice, which is celebrated over that of Nicholas, even when she does not make a successful artist, for the novel ends with her being a model.

The freedom gained by the initiates does not allow their full membership to the Few. There is no defined meaning at the end of their journeys, except with Charles. The path is dictated by their omnipotent, condescending mentors who force different ideologies throughout the four analyzed fictions. The greatest failure lies in Nicholas's choice which is taken compulsorily, and that contradicts the existential principle of freedom. He mistakes his own emotional abuse for emotional maturity and believes that Alison is a better partner,

simply because she is a symbol of the real rather than the fantastic. Alison is equally aloof and what distinguishes her from Julie is her aforementioned symbolic importance in Nicholas's journey. Thus, the reader fails to grasp an epistemological triumph at the end of the initiate's journey. Freedom is more successfully tackled as a theme than authenticity. Freedom is an end in itself which promotes absurdism which Fowles argues against in *The Aristos*, for, according to him, good art is supposed to create meaning rather than to subvert it.

Aesthetically speaking, freedom as an end, rather than meaning, does not create bad art. Defying the nemo, lies in creating a type of art that survives time. The nemo is an unconscious state of nobodiness, as we have already mentioned at the start, that the individual tries to defy through either belonging to the herd or 'make it new', and defying the nemo through art means creating a work of art that is timeless and free from categorization and any form of obsession. To Fowles, for the artist to survive the nemo, he should neither imitate nor obsess over creating new forms to distinguish himself. The artist should simply embrace that state of nobodiness. In an attempt to survive time and defy the nemo, Fowles believes that the art that reveals such harmony should be balanced in the sense that it should defend an epistemological end through its themes and form. That is the reason why Fowles is passionate about creating characters that seek meaning. However, in spite of his didactic attempts, Fowles fails. Instead of finding existential authenticity, his characters end up embracing the absurd.

Albert Camus is more successful as an artist than Sartre because absurdism, which is promoted by the former, is rather more relatable to the human condition that coexists with modernity than existentialism. In here lies the reason which diverts Fowles's thematic attention from existentialism to the nature of fiction in his late fiction. Existentialism results in didacticism which is the major aesthetic flaw in Fowles's early fiction. It is in his discussion of existentialism as a theme that Fowles creates an ironic dichotomy; while he preaches

freedom to his characters through his mentors, he uses the latter to speak for himself, which results in his absolute authorial control over his characters. Character freedom is a symptom of authorial authenticity since it means creating a different variety of human samples that are able to communicate with readers from every time and space. It is in character freedom, and not in freedom as a theme, that the writer achieves a reconciling aesthetic and thematic whole in his work.

Fowles's use of the didactic stems from the author's fear to glamorize the inarticulate hero who is celebrated in the contemporary fiction of his time and from the author's fondness of French existentialism. *The Collector* expresses Fowles's beliefs through Miranda and G. P. The outcome promotes not only didacticism, but also elitism. Miranda looks down on, not only Clegg and what he stands for, but also a whole social group of what she calls the 'New People', which is a rising social group in Britain. Miranda sees that Clegg's faults stem from his social group and not from his pathological self. This creates an unreconciling gap between the two and a shift in the sympathy of the reader from Miranda to Clegg, which contradicts the ultimate aim of the author. Although this would be doomed as a major aesthetic failure, Fowles regains balance with an accidental success which lies in his representation of Clegg. Clegg, with his unpromoted persona, is the most independent character in Fowles's fiction. He is the only character that survives Fowles's didactic control. Other antagonists in his fiction also do, yet Clegg's role in *The Collector* is as equally important as that of Miranda's. Clegg, thus, possesses the right psychological verisimilitude which redeems its author of his omnipotence.

Fowles's notions of the Many and the Few create a separationist society of two opposite hostile groups. The Many are seen as ignorant and inferior while the Few are intelligent, empathic, and superior. The only possible coexistence is through education, which has proven ineffectual since the potential Few are selfish, arrogant, and, most importantly,

aware of their own superiority. *The Magus* further stresses this dichotomy, for Nicholas finds no meaning.

Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is the most successful work. The implied ideology of Fowles is solely expressed by the narrator since his characters are Victorian and lack the right linguistic jargon to speak for their author. The novel is less didactic and its theme of hazard, evolution, and freedom go smoothly with its plot, open structure, and its three endings. Charles is the only less condescending potential Few in Fowles's early fiction. The members of the Many are more intelligent and the elitist view is overshadowed by Sam's canniness. *The French lieutenant's Woman* is the only novel in which Fowles constitutes an epistemology that does not surpass the superbly subversive structural play. Fowles's late fiction lacks this balance, for the thematic supremacy of existential authenticity is replaced with a focus on the nature of fiction that is paralleled with an excessive complexity of fiction that represents the complexity of life itself. Fowles, in *The Ebony Tower*, challenges his former epistemological notions on life and fiction and embraces postmodern ontology. He openly rejects meaning and ceases speaking for his narrators and characters. The aesthetic failure of didacticism is compensated in his late fiction by giving up on meaning and changing his principles of what defines good art. In *The Ebony Tower*, Fowles creates subversive scenarios of interpretations to his characters' actions. The outcome is aesthetically appealing since it celebrates a character freedom that is rather infrequent in his earlier novels. Ironically, Fowles's least free characters, like Clegg and most of the characters in *The Ebony Tower*, are the most free, from an aesthetic prospect. An ontological interpretation to Fowles's fiction is, thus, the most befitting form of reading.

The technical devices of subversion used by Fowles are devices which support an ontological end, which makes absurdism, rather than existentialism, a coherent theme that synchronizes perfectly with the implemented postmodern patterns. Fowles is authentically at

home when he rids his texts from the existential quest for meaning. His obsession with his own conception of good art enslaves his characters and creates unparalleled coherence of theme and form.

Different patterns of subversion support an ontological reading, among them subverting romance. Fowles writes within the tradition of romance to later denounce it, and so his writing is a form of a rewriting to the tradition. The first reason for the subversion is Fowles's efforts to approximate his fiction to realism, for he sees in it a superior genre. While romance explains the unapologetic use of elitism, which celebrates individualism rather than socialism, and the symbolic use of women as archetypal mysterious others, along with other archetypal characters, realism explains the didactic interference of the writer and his mentors. Although existentialism is supposed to synchronize with the structure of romance, since the latter is centered on the quest narrative, the implemented parody of the same structure dictates a different reading. This shows, since Fowles favors an existential reading to his early fiction, that parody is not consciously pronounced at first; it is until he gives up on meaning in his collection of short stories that his use of parody is more pronounced. The evidence for this is the unparodied use of the theme of the Many and the Few in his three first novels and its parodied use in his collection of short stories. The muse, however, remains unparodied in all his fiction.

The elitist discourse is celebrated in *The Collector*, *The Magus*, and even *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, although the latter creates more intelligent members of the Many. The same theme is present in "Poor Koko", yet Fowles criticizes his own conception of the mentor and presents us with a clueless elderly who fails to communicate with a member of the Many who is impressively and unprecedentedly brilliant. This shows that Fowles understands the implied elitism in his early fiction and the aesthetic menace of its didactic influence.

Other parodied elements in Fowles's early fiction are the *domaine*, which can be another word for 'atmosphere' in romance, and freedom. Parody of romance fails completely only in *The Magus*, which makes the effort that the author takes up to criticize Nicholas's selfishness somehow unfulfilling. This creates an aesthetic failure that touches on every theme in the novel. What is left is a form of romance 'made new' rather than parodied. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, parody touches on the narrative rather than on the themes. Freedom is accomplished depending on the protagonist's choices and personal growth. The choices are three, and so the endings are three. Although there is an ending that supports an epistemological success where Charles finds meaning, the multiplicity of the endings is a technique that suggests an ontological triumph. The narrative supports such a triumph, and so Fowles commits to 'making it new' rather than making it 'meaningful'.

We have already mentioned one reason behind the use of the unconscious and conscious parody. The second reason lies in Fowles's aim to decategorize his works and to avoid falling under the rich heritage of his ancestors. His conflicts as an artist are what define and, ironically, categorize him as a 'postmodernist'. Fowles's journey of authenticity is a journey defined by different disagreeing tensions; one is to escape through romance; the other is to teach; the last is to subvert both through unconscious and conscious parody.

The second reason is the leading one in guiding Fowles's instincts as an artist in his use of parody, for Fowles exhausts it in other techniques of narrative, among them metafiction, unreliable narrativity, and the use of multiple and undetermined endings. Fowles masters experimenting with these different narrative tools, which allows him a freedom that surpasses that of his characters and readers. His initial aim, however, contradicts this outcome. The main reason for the use of the metafictional is to free his characters and readers. Creating mentors and initiates has a purpose of allowing the character the role of a reader, like Nicholas in *The Magus*, yet Nicholas is forced to defy Conchis's theatre, since he has no freedom in it,

through his own version of narrative that imprisons the reader. The only omnipotent presence is that of the author, for Nicholas, even through his narrative, is still the same selfish person who pretends that the masque has changed him. Fowles uses fictional self-consciousness to explore the theme of the authenticity of the contemporary artist and his journey of survival under his ancestors' heritage. Nicholas's narrative encompasses another fictional dimension that brings the text to an imitation of reality, giving himself the role of the reader in another text and giving art a new definition which approximates reality to fiction rather than the traditional opposite direction.

While Fowles uses the first person narrator in *The Magus*, which permits one structural open ending, he takes on the traditional narrativity of the omniscience in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The use of the latter results in three different endings that add to its historical aspect a structural openness that matches the thematic undertaking of existential freedom. However, even when this novel achieves the balance that Fowles desires, it still preaches an absolute power of the artist. The omniscient narrator claims that the author is 'dead' and that his readers and characters are free, yet it is a claim that guarantees nothing but the author's survival in the age of the 'nouveau roman'. Thus, the preached freedom is subverted by its tools of metafiction. Drawing the reader's attention to the constructedness of the different worlds the narrator creates diverts this attention from the development and maturity of the characters. The two last endings are radically different although they are just one chapter apart as if the characters who take the dissimilar decisions in these two chapters are different.

Fowles does without any of these decisions in his collection of short stories, for he shifts the thematic attention from existentialism to the nature of fiction, which takes the technique of fictional self-consciousness to an extreme level. Fowles, thus, embraces his absolute freedom to create and subvert different meanings. Ontology triumphs whether Fowles

consciously desires it or not, yet when he is conscious, like in *The Ebony Tower*, he adds a celebrated schizophrenic structural emphasis to the already acknowledged absurdist discourse, a harmonious combination of paranoia that guarantees not only his survival, but also his supremacy as a postmodernist.

This postmodern persona that Fowles denies at first is reinforced through his use of intertextuality. Fowles does not simply imitate and parody romance only, other genres and literary allusions are also subverted to create a matrix of plurality which denies his texts the possibility of an exclusive meaning. In *The Collector*, for example, the allusion to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* is not faithful; through his rival characters, Fowles rereads and rewrites the same text which changes its original significance and adds to his own text a plurality of meaning that highlights its absurdist discourse. Another example is the subversion of the historical novel to what Linda Hutcheon calls the 'historiographic metafiction', which is another notion for the postmodern historical fiction. The use of the anachronistic persona of the narrator, who is a figure of the contemporary time and the Victorian age, adds a self-conscious fictionality that the traditional historical novel lacks. The intertextual use of Victorian literatures and contemporary existentialism and feminism add another anachronistic outcome that parodies and subverts former historical fiction.

Although Fowles seems rather apologetic at first about the obscurity of his texts through this plurality of meaning, he makes it his mission to embrace it in his *The Ebony Tower*. His collection of stories celebrates one theme, which is the nature of fiction. This theme explores the journey of his characters as writers and readers of the same texts Fowles writes. The character becomes a reader, like the narrator in "Poor Koko" who tries to decode the behavior of the burglar. The reader becomes a writer when he joins the characters who actively refuse their fictional roles and take on the mission of rewriting; the best example for this is Isobel in "Enigma" who refuses the detective discourse of approaching the case of the

disappearance of Fielding. Fowles, then, centers his collection on the writing mission and its challenges and approximates reality to fiction rather than the opposite. The product lies in the world of fiction and not outside it.

Meanings are, thus, construed and subverted through many postmodern devices. Parody, metafiction, narrative unreliability, and intertextuality supply Fowles's texts with the proper corresponding patterning for the ontological ends they endorse. The failure of the epistemological journey of Fowles is in itself a success in two ways. The first lies in relieving his artistic anxiety by separating his creative persona from that of his modernist forbearers. The second lies in his success in synchronizing the form of his texts with the appropriate thematic purposes.

Fowles is an authentic author, but not according to his conception of good art, and not until he relinquishes his interest in existential authenticity and his prototypical notion of a society, which lies in the superiority of one group, the Few, over another, the Many. However, we cannot say that he has failed himself completely if we are to faithfully define his place according to his own conception of good art. Fowles sees in good art a representation of a timeless human condition, and he does represent such a condition, which is that of the artist who struggles to achieve authenticity under the rich heritage of the ancestor. Fowles's journey is the addressed timeless condition.

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