Postmodernist Narrative Strategies in the Novels of John Fowles

Dissertationsarbeit von Jens Pollheide zur Erlangung des Grades eines *Dr. phil.*

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0. Introduction

In the 1990s, I became fascinated by the novels of John Fowles, which were then read in a seminar at Bielefeld University. What first fascinated me was, of course, Fowles' ability to write 'page-turners', i.e. his novels are hard to put down once you start reading them. Gradually, however, I also became aware of the fact that other than in existentialist terms, his novels have a multiplicity of other, sometimes related, meanings and elements. Since the secondary literature about Fowles abounds in the exploration of existentialist meanings, this area of research is already covered.

The novels of Fowles, though, can also be considered as postmodernist literature. This possibility was first hinted at in the works of Hutcheon. Since Hutcheon (1989) considers *historiographic metafiction* to be one of the paradigmatic forms of a postmodernist literature, she naturally analysed the two novels of Fowles that can be categorised as such, viz. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*. Her analysis mentions only a few of the postmodernist elements in these two novels, and understandably so, given the aim and the scope of her study.

Upon re-reading the other novels of Fowles, I thought that an analysis of the postmodernist elements would be both a rewarding and interesting topic for research, not least because of the fact that his other fiction gave me the idea that there is a change of thematic orientation. My initial idea was that each of the novels exhibits one particular postmodernist element. The two historiographic novels, of course, are preoccupied with the problem of how to know something about the past from a contemporary perspective. The background of such a problematizing is a critique of representation. With the concept of a critique of representation as a background, other postmodernist elements in Fowles' fiction have been identified, such as the critique of interpretation. If we start from the assumption that representational naiveté (denoting a 1:1- correspondence between sign and signified) is no longer an option for us, any representation or interpretation necessarily reflects not only the objective state of affairs, but as well the preferences, predilections, and even prejudices of those engaged in the process. This in turn

means that writers, who present us with constructs and induce us to form interpretative hypotheses, cannot help to let there own interests influence what they write.

Now since to date there is no coherent study that analyses the postmodernist elements in all of Fowles' fiction from this perspective, I decided to do some research on my own, and the paper you are reading is the result of this research. As you will see, there is a kind of development as far as the postmodernist elements in the fiction of Fowles are concerned. While his first novels (*The Collector* and *The Magus*) highlight the particularity of representation and interpretation, stating the particularity of each character as a constructor of meanings, the two historiographic novels are obsessed with the epistemological status of past events for contemporary representative strategies. Fowles' other novels, as we will see, are more concerned with the role the writer plays in all of this, and ask whether or not sometimes he is guilty of propagating, if indirectly, the very stereotypes that come under attack in the written texts. If such an ambiguity is realised in a self-conscious manner, the resulting attitude is one of both complicity and critique, which can be seen as the postmodernist attitude *per se*.

Other postmodernist elements will be identified in order to arrive at these points. The novels of Fowles are referred to as follows: *The Collector* as *C* plus number of page; *The Magus* as *M* plus number of page; *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as *FLW* plus number of page; *A Maggot* as *AM* plus number of page; *The Ebony Tower* as *ET* plus number of page; *Daniel Martin* as *DM* plus number of page; and finally *Mantissa* as *Mt* plus number of page.

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1. Defining The Undefinable: What Is Postmodernism?

1. 1. What is Postmodernism?

Before outlining the conception of postmodernism used in the present discussion, some terminological definitions are in order. When looking at the use of the words 'postmodernity', 'postmodernism', 'postmodernist' or 'postmodern', it is striking that the meaning of these words seems to change according to what book you are reading. This is not only due to the sometimes exaggerated caprice of some authors, but is closely linked to the respective contexts in which they occur. The three most important contexts for this study are the historical, the philosophical, and the literary context.

Within the historical (or historico-sociological, if you prefer) context, the adjective 'postmodern' describes the period which follows modernity, in much of the same way that modernity followed the Middle Ages (cf. Best 1991; 2). One of the first to coin the term 'postmodernity' was the British historian Toynbee, for whom postmodernity begins at the end of the 19th century and is a period characterised by war, social upheaval and change.

> [Toynbee] characterized the previous modern period as a middle-class bourgeois era marked by social stability, rationalism, and progress - a typical bourgeois middle-class conception of an era marked by cycles of crisis, war and revolution. The postmodern age, by contrast, is a 'Time of Troubles' marked by the collapse of rationalism and the ethos of the Enlightenment. (Best 1991; 6)

In a philosophical context, the adjective 'postmodern' designates an attitude of critique of traditional values and ideologies, and it also describes the Renaissance of epistemological doubts and critique. The positions generally subsumed under the term 'postmodern' in its philosophical sense are as numerous as the different writers that are considered to be postmodern, and regrettably, it often seems to be a question of the preferences of the respective author whose works will be deemed postmodern: those of Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari, Barthes, Baudrillard or Lyotard... I will concentrate mainly on the epistemological critique and the critique of what will later be called meta-narratives,

because these two concepts stand in a very close relation to the literary concept of 'postmodernism' which is the most important of them all for present purposes.

On a literary level, 'postmodernism' denotes a literary theory and practice which criticises and overcomes both traditional narrative forms, interpretations and methods of analysis as well as their 'modern' counterparts. Consequently, while we may assume that literary modernism shares an (however vague) methodological unity because of the fact that it puts a lot of emphasis on the way or the form of presentation, postmodernism is characterised by diversity - a diversity that often does not even attempt to create a structured impression.

Unquestionably, the literary concept of postmodernism is in close relation with the historical term 'postmodern': several authors have pointed out that the genesis of the term 'postmodernity' is closely related to the two major catastrophes of the 20th century: World War II and the annihilation of cultural, ethnic, and social minorities in the Nazi's concentration camps. Lyotard, who can be considered as the founder of the theory of the postmodern, argues that these two catastrophes fundamentally shattered the then still prevalent unquestionable belief in rationality as the source of both humanism, development, and morality (cf. Best 1991; 12). The simple fact that the Nazis used rationality and technical perfection to achieve their hideous aims, and that they could stylize away the horror by perverting the notion of art, questions the fundamental validity of, say, rationality as such. Emphasis is put on the question 'Who is using rationality in whose interests to achieve what kind of aim?' - a question that is very near to the notion of 'the politics of representation' which we will discuss later on. While rationality as a standard had been unquestionably accepted before, it is by no means so uncompromisingly revered in postmodernism - and this is what the critique of metanarratives is all about.

The Italian historian Etizioni defines postmodernism more along epistemological lines: for him, it is the change of information technology that subverts as well as redefines our notion of empirical verifiability (and ‘our’ here not only means the laity, but includes 'professionals' from all areas as well). One of the most prolific proponents of postmodern theory in its epistemologically critical sense is without a doubt Baudrillard, whose theories will be discussed in 1. 1. 2. 1.

1. 1. 1. The Critique of Modern Epistemology

'Postmodern' as a philosophical term originated in a critique of and a reaction to the values of modernity. Perhaps the most important part of this critique is a questioning of modern epistemology, a questioning of what knowledge is and it can be defined, acquired and possessed.

In contrast to postmodern knowledge, *modern* knowledge is characterised by the following features:

-a belief in the fundaments and origins of what we like to call knowledge, which are not questioned themselves; most theorists of the postmodern call these fundaments 'meta-narratives'. To give a very simple example: if you answer the question 'What is a good action?' with 'A good action is one that is in keeping with rationality.', you may have helped to explain the nature of a feasible action, but you have not explained why rationality should be a criterion for action in the first place. It is these meta-narratives which allow for a progressive unifying of knowledge, but this is absolutely no reason why they shouldn't be questioned themselves;

- the existence as well as the unquestioned status of these meta-narratives is teleologically motivated, i.e. they exist by virtue of the fact that man wants to extend his knowledge, wants to have unified moral and epistemological criteria; the postmodern theoretician now behaves in much the same way as those who deconstructed the teleological argument for the existence of God: he simply says that goals may explain why we employ certain strategies (e.g.rationality), but they cannot justify them or prove their validity; another example is Derrida's deconstruction of de Saussure's theory of signs, which identifies the binary opposition of sign and signified as vital for de Saussure's theory, then argues against the binary nature of this opposition, and ends by refuting De Saussure's theory (or so some would say). Consequently, postmodern theory is not attempting to develop unified theories and norms, but is characterised by appreciating a plurality or heterogeneity of explanatory schemes (cf. Best 1991; 165) –

- a strategy that is very similar indeed to Vattimo's concept of the *pensiero debole* (cf. further down).

If we define rationality and empirical verifiability as the key tenets of *modern knowledge*, it is small wonder that they have been defined and deconstructed as *metanarratives* by the theorists of postmodernity. But there is a more fundamental meta-narrative, still. To develop a system of empirical verifiability in the first place, it is necessary to have a unified and unambiguous system of representation. Without being able to define exactly what a 'vertebrate' is, it makes no sense to call an animal vertebrate. What is needed here is not really a one-to-one correspondence of sign and signifier, but nevertheless the relation can by no means be arbitrary. A unified theory of representation is what modern epistemology presupposes and it is precisely what postmodernists question.

There is one theory that is shared by postmodernists and post-structuralists alike: the relation that holds between signs and outward reality is reversed, as it is argued that the state of things in the outward world that defines our systems of representation, but rather that the nature of our systems of representation determines the way in which we perceive the outward world. As Linda Hutcheon's editor has written on the back cover of her *The Politics of Postmodernism* (1989): '[S]he challenges the seeming transparency and apparent apolitical innocence of our visual images and verbal stories, asserting that these construct rather than reflect or express our experience of the world.' (Hawkes in Hutcheon 1989)

After criticising and deconstructing the criteria as well as the values of modernity, three possible consequences are available:

For theorists such as Baudrillard, the result of the deconstruction of meta-narratives is mostly negative: for them, a contact whatsoever with 'reality' is irredeemably lost; it is for this reason that it is argued that postmodernism results in a dissolution of both object and subject, and therefore in a total inability to act.

Other theorists value the resultant lack of orientation and delight in the plurality of different discourses, for them the dethronement of rationality is an important step for liberating, once again, the instincts. Examples for this position not only include Lyotard's 'politics of desire', but also the vitalistic writings of Nietzsche, who invented postmodernism before somebody coined the term in the first place.

Finally, we can opt for a critically dialectic attitude towards postmodernism along the lines of Linda Hutcheon. Her concept of postmodernism is a clearly literary-aesthetic one, balancing advantages as well as risks (cf. Hutcheon 1989). It is primarily this concept of postmodernism to which the present pages are indebted. One of the main reasons for this choice is the fact that such a questioning attitude makes postmodernism an original theoretical position, while a more or less radical epistemological critique may be found in all centuries.

1. 1. 2. The Critique of Representation

1. 1. 2. 1. Baudrillard and the Simulacrum

One of the most radical proponents of a radical critique of representation is Baudrillard, for whom there is a clear connection between postmodernity as a historical era and a change of the relation between signs and things in the outward world. As an historical era, he defines postmodernity as being characterised by an increasing importance of signs of all kinds - a development that coincides with end of World War II and the development of what we now call 'consumer society'. The respective importance of the signs and the things they represent changes: while modernity, as an era of production, considered signs as secondary in relation to the things they represent, the postmodern attitude is characterised by allotting more importance to the sign, and the era is defined as one of simulation (cf. Best 1991; 118 ff.).

One of the main reasons for this development according to Baudrillard is the advancing perfection of our sign systems, which paradoxically leads to a blurring of the boundaries of both different systems of representation, as well as the boundary between the signs and the reality they (should) represent. A decisive role within this process is allotted to the mass media, which produce the *simulacrum* (the sign that is 'taken for' reality):

> Baudrillard argued that today the mass media have neutralized reality by stages: first they *reflected* it; then they *masked* and perverted it; next they had to *mask its absence*; and finally they produced instead the *simulacrum* of the real, the destruction of meaning and of all relation to reality. (Hutcheon 1989; 33)

Another feature of postmodernism is the mixing of formerly distinct categories of representation, resulting both in an aesthetisation of everyday life and in an ongoing popularization of so-called high art. Baudrillard's foremost example is television, with its constant blurring of the categories 'information', 'advertisement', and 'entertainment', resulting in the meanwhile very familiar concept of 'infotainment'. This loss of formerly distinct genres, linked with a constant bombardment of the populace with repetitive signs, results in a different attitude towards both the systems of signs and the things they represent, which might be described as being characterised by boredom, indifference, and passivity (cf. Best 1991; 120). In its most extreme consequence, this indifference is linked with a heightened auto dynamic of the systems of representation, depriving the subject of all possibilities to reify the object. For Baudrillard, and others as well, postmodernity is the era of the reign of the object.

But not all theorists are as radical as is Baudrillard. Especially when speaking about the formerly distinct categories of 'high' and 'popular' art, there are postmodernists who value the abolishment of any clear-cut borderline. This may suffice to indicate that a critique of our systems of representation does not have to result in cultural pessimism. For present purposes, suffice it to say that almost all theorists of the postmodern identify the abolishment of a clear borderline between 'high' and 'popular' art as a characteristic feature of postmodernism, irrespective of the judgement they pronounce on it.

1. 1. 2. 2. Questioning Representationality

Whereas for Baudrillard, postmodernism is marked by the *simulacrum* and the resultant loss of connection of signs and criteria of truth such as reality, rationality and the like, other theorists such as Hutcheon describe it as an era not of dissolution, but of questioning of the relation that holds between the sign and reality. While accepting the initial premises of the Baudrillard'ian argument, she criticises the conclusions he draws as naive. Her main argument in this context is a pointing to the fact that our ability to make sense of the world has always depended on the use of signs: 'The postmodern, as I have been defining it, is not a degeneration into 'hyperreality' but a questioning of what reality can mean and

how we can come to know it.' (Hutcheon 1989; 34) Her attitude is consequently one of ambivalence, and her version of postmodernism links the two elements of complicity and critique (Hutcheon 1989; 11).

Criticising Baudrillard, she argues that it is not epistemological theory that shatters our system of representation, but art, especially literature and photography (Hutcheon 1989; 32). For reasons that are beyond the scope of the present study, a limiting of the applicability of postmodern arguments to the sphere of art seems more convincing than epistemological postmodernism.

1. 1. 3. Lyotard's Critique of Metanarratives

Jean-Francois Lyotard is often considered to be the theoretical founding father of postmodernism. His most important contribution to the debate is *La Condition Postmoderne*, a study that sets out to define the conditions of knowledge in (post?)industrial societies.

One of the key tenets of Lyotard's confronting of Western philosophy and epistemology is his critique of the fundamental way in which they use binary oppositions such as 'universality/singularity', 'discourse/perception', 'rationality/irrationality' etc. Lyotard argues that traditional Western thought has always priviledged the first of the of the above terms, without ever questioning, let alone justifying this preference. Consequently, Lyotard sets out to advocate the underpriviledged terms of those binary oppositions.

If modernity is an age that prefers the word rather than the image, sense rather than nonsense, rationality rather than irrationality, the *ego* rather than the *id* ...etc., Lyotard argues that postmodernism is an age that values visuality, unmediated perception and emotion (cf. Best 1991; 149 ff.).

Modernism's preference for one of the terms of the binary oppositions is seen as in keeping with its characteristic demand for unifying theories and models (cf. 1.1.). It is here that the discourse of power enters the scene, for Lyotard argues that such unifying, rationality-based theories would violate the singularity and particularity of the phenomena: 'Reason and power are one and the same thing.' (Lyotard 1984; 11) This links nicely with a description of metanarratives as silencing its opposite (i.e. rationality silencing unreason) (Best 1991; 170). Lyotard's strat-

egy is not to accept these metanarratives at face value, he rather tries to criticise them from within, by working out their inner contradictions (Best 1991; 159 ff.).

There are three metanarratives the deconstruction of which seems to be of special importance for Lyotard: the metanarratives of development, of progress, and of truth. His scepticism of the validity of these metanarratives leads him to argue that postmodern knowledge is mainly produced by running counter to preconceived and already accepted modes of thought.

While Hutcheon recognizes and accepts the impetus of the Lyotard'ian arguments (i.e. the importance of the formerly marginalized for postmodern art(s); decentring of discourses and the subject; new focus on singularity and particularity), she criticises Lyotard for being too rigorous. It is striking, she argues, that Lyotard's 'reversal of all values' is in itself a universalistic position, a position certainly not in keeping with the proposed particularity. As other theorists have pointed out, a critique of the metanarratives of modernism is perfectly in order, but we have to be aware of the fact that we both need and want metanarratives to make sense of our lives at all:

> It is likely (...) that we are condemned to narrative in that individuals and cultures organize, interpret, and make sense of their experience through story-telling modes (...) If this is so, it would seem preferable to bring to light the narratives of modernity so as to critically examine and dissect them, rather than to simply prohibit certain sorts of narratives by Lyotardian Thought Police. (Best 1991; 173)

Of course Lyotard would object to such a characterisation, since he is not simply prohibiting certain types of discourses. An advocating of the *pensiero debole* is in keeping with his analysis of postmodern thought, as Vattimo has argued: tracing back the deconstruction of the search for metaphysical fundaments to Nietzsche's nihilism, Lyotard argues that such a deconstruction (which may use the very methods as well as assumptions it seeks to undermine in the long run) offers us no chance of eventually leaving modernity behind. If modernity is characterised by novelty as its most important characteristic, it is impossible to step out of modernity by adopting yet new principles: be it in art or philosophy:

> Si la modernité se définit comme l'époque du dépassement, de la nouveauté qui vieillit et se voit immédiatement remplacé par une nouveauté encore plus nouvelle, dans un inépuisable mouvement qui

> décourage toute créativité précisément en l'exigeant et en l'imposant comme la seule forme de vie, il deviendra impossible d'en sortir par un *mouvement de dépassement*. (Vattimo 1987; 170 f.)

To those who describe him as defending the traditionally underrepresented term of binary oppositions, Vattimo might reply that this method (introduced into Western Philosophy by Nietzsche) at least helps to point out the constructed nature of what other generations have considered to be the fundaments of knowledge, while he might still hold that such an analysis remains in the very terms it seeks to deconstruct. His own solution, which he develops out of a Nietzschean reading of a couple of Heidegger's key texts, is to develop a strategy that finally overcomes the limited nature of binary oppositions:

> Ce qu'*Humain, trop humain* appelle, tout à la fin, une 'philosophie du matin', c'est précisement une pensée qui est tournée non plus vers l'origine ou vers le fondement, mais bien vers la proximité. On pourrait tout aussi bien définir cette pensée de la proximité comme une pensée de l'erreur; ou, mieux encore, de l'errance, pour souligner qu'il ne s'agit là de penser le non-vrai, mais de prêter attention au devenir des constructions 'fausses' de la métaphysique, de la morale, de la religion et de l'art, comme tissu d'errements qui constituent seuls la richesse ou, plus simplement, l'*être* de la *réalité*. (Vattimo 1987; 174)

For present purposes, an attitude of 'complicity and critique' promises to bear more fruit because as we will see, postmodern narrative texts do not categorically condemn certain discourses, but oscillate between acceptance, critique, and refusal. However we might break down the positions, the following quote nicely sums up those metanarratives that are being questioned in postmodernist literature:

> Like much contemporary literary theory, the postmodernist novel puts into question that entire series of interconnected concepts that have come to be associated with what we conveniently label as liberal humanism: autonomy, transcendence, certainty, authority, unity, totalization, system, universalization, center, continuity, teleology, closure, hierarchy, homogeneity, uniqueness, origin.
> (Hutcheon 1988; 57)

1. 2. Postmodern Literature - Literary Postmodernism ?

While so far, we have elaborated mainly the semiotic and epistemological conditions under which postmodern literature generated, it is now time to define some of its basic characteristics. In view of our epistemological discussion, it is no surprise that one of the key tenets of postmodern literature is the problematizing of realism as a constitutive feature of the novel. To be sure, realism has ceased to be important for modernist literature as well, but while modernism abandoned realism to pursue formalist explorations, postmodernist literature is characterised by a problematizing of both realism and self-reflexive writing: 'In postmodern fiction, too, the documentary impulse of realism meets the problematizing of reference seen in earlier self-reflexive modernism. Postmodern narrative is filtered through the history of both.' (Hutcheon 1989; 29) Consequently, postmodernist literature often exhibits an ambiguous attitude towards its own central themes, and Hutcheon calls her version of postmodernism a construct rather than a theory:

> As you will no doubt have noticed, since the prefatory note there is another fiction or construct operating here too: my own paradoxical postmodernism of complicity and critique, of reflexivity and historicity, that at once inscribes and subverts the conventions and ideologies of the dominant cultural and social forces of the twentieth-century western world. (Hutcheon 1989; 11)

Postmodernism also reproaches modernism for being too elitist in its focus on *avant-garde* methods of presentation. As we have already seen, the criterion of novelty might be seen as one of the most important constructs of modernism, and this is certainly true for modernist art as well. Lyotard characterises modernity as the era of the idolatry of novelty, not only by working out the intellectual, but as well the social conditions under which such a position could be adopted (cf. Vattimo 1987; 105). As is the case in the domain of metaphysics and ontology, the solution that Vattimo proposes is to adopt an attitude that is inspired by Heidegger's term *Verwindung*, which designates more than a simple surpassing of formerly unquestioned constructs and concepts: '(...) la *Verwindung* indique un outrepassement qui maintien en soi-même, les traits de l'accep-

tation et de l'approfondissement.' (Vattimo 1987; 177) Methodically, this critique of elitism becomes manifest in a frequent crossing of the boundaries of 'serious' and 'popular' art, exemplified by the incorporation of elements of pop-art, glamour and *kitsch* (Best 1991; 10 ff.). Vattimo would be more radical in the choice of his terms, since he sees post-modernist art as negating its own status as art – logically so, since up to modernism, the status of works of art and the constant development of this status (with technical reproducibility as one of its last stages) has remained unquestioned. It is interesting that the use that Vattimo makes of Heidegger's term *Verwindung* comes pretty close to the concept of complicity and critique advocated by Hutcheon - both concepts, I argue, criticise existing constructs without blowing them to pieces:

> Il s'agit, encore une fois, de relations qui peuvent être de manière générale subsumées sous la catégorie heideggérienne de la *Verwindung*: relations ironico-iconique qui, a la fois, redoublent et re-fondent les images et les mots de la culture massifiée, et pas seulement au sens d'une négation de cette culture. (Vattimo 1987; 62)

Yet another borderline that is crossed in postmodernist literature is the one of fictional vs. 'truthful' depiction and description; the resultant form, *historiographic metafiction*, is considered as a paradigm of postmodernist literature by Hutcheon (1989; 35). What is important here is not so much the mixing of formerly distinct genres, but rather the questioning of realism that it provokes.

1. 2. 1. Historiographic Metafiction

One of the things that are foremost considered to be problematic in historiographic metafiction is the status of texts as such. Because of the arguments we discussed in the sections above, it is no longer clear whether any given text is descriptive or fictional. Without adopting the poststructuralist (or deconstructivist) thesis that there is no difference between descriptive and fictional texts, *historiographic metafiction* is characterised by a questioning of the fundamental principles of both, which becomes manifest on the level of narrative techniques: in a mixture of 'realist reference' and 'modernist self-reflexivity', each of the two concepts critically questions the validity of the other.

One of the central questions of *historiographic metafiction* is that of the (im)possibility of knowing anything about past events from a contemporary perspective (Hutcheon 1989; 47). The genre thus voices the postmodern conviction that the respective meta-narrative of each story has to be questioned - a questioning that problematises rather than discredits. Hutcheon's example for this thesis is history as a science, which needs meta-narratives in order to paint a coherent picture of the various events by giving them structure and orientation. By questioning unifying, totalising meta-narratives, historiographic novels '(...) structurally both install and subvert the teleology, closure, and causality of narrative, both historical and fictive' (Hutcheon 1989; 64). Her prominent use of the term 'politics of representation' alludes to the teleological motivation for using a specific meta-narrative (cf. above). The resulting instability of representation to be sure is not only a characteristic feature of postindustrial societies: 'Historical meaning may thus be seen today as unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional, but postmodernism argues that, in fact, it has always been so.' (Hutcheon 1989; 67)

On the level of narrative technique, this position is reflected by the fact that the reader is often presented with a certain interpretation which is undermined later on. Furthermore, historiographic metafiction is conscious of the fact that the representation of past events occurs in the present, and consequently it is marked by a frequent use of anachronistic characterisations. The main goal of employing these narrative techniques is to point out the problematic status of so-called 'historical documents', which no longer allow for an unmediated, direct access to the facts they represent; in contrast, they cry for an interpretation of their own fundamental principles. In contrast to post-structuralism, postmodernism does not claim that all past events are 'textual constructs' that never have existed outside representation. It is rather marked, once again, by the rather dialectic conviction that ' (...) past events existed empirically, but in epistemological terms we can only know them today through texts.' (Hutcheon 1989; 81)

One way to materialize such a conviction is the use of footnotes, traditionally a method of illustrating what is claimed in the text. Other than disrupt-

ing the reader's attention, it is interesting that most footnotes direct the reader to yet other texts. In conjunction with anachronicity, these narrative techniques serve to point to the particularity of both the tense employed and the time narrated. The term 'politics of representation' nicely summarises the theoretical points discussed so far, because what postmodernist texts highlight is the motivation of a specific person (e.g. 'author') to decide on one specific way of representation: '[R]epresentation is always alteration, be it in language or images, and it always has its politics.' (Hutcheon 1989; 92) What is central here is, of course, the goals of an author:

> Drawing on Foucault, and especially on the later Foucault's return to the vexing problem of the subject, this postmodernism recognizes that in the absence of representation it matters more than ever who has authored, or who controls, any given representation. If representations do not represent the world they must represent something else and in doing so they will inevitably be political, always emerging within a time- and place-bound ideological framework. (Bertens 1997; 6)

1. 2. 2. Narrative Strategies

Another narrative technique that serves to highlight both the particularity as well as the 'politics' of a certain text or author is the mixture of formerly distinct kinds of text, such factual and fictional ones (cf. Bertens 1997; 9), novel and historical chronicle, and novel and autobiography. This technique is closely linked with a mixture of formerly separate points of view. Taking up the modernist question whether one author alone can be considered the creator of a specific work of art (and thus hinting at the importance of intertexts that might have influenced this author), the adoption of a single and unified point of view is questioned.

Foucault was one of the first to point out how important the adoption of one specific subject is for the theory of representation. With the evanescence of a single, unified subject, there is no longer the possibility to tell a coherent story (cf. Hutcheon 1988; 158 ff.). Postmodernism is especially interested in the political dimensions of such deconstructions, since traditionally, the subject was characterised as white, male, and bourgeois. On the level of narrative technique,

various attempts shatter (if not abolish) this construct, and possible strategies are the mixing and suspending of traditional points of view (such as omniscient vs. first-person narrator), intrusion of the author in a text told, written by somebody else, and general attempts to qualify the coherence of narrative modes. Two important techniques to achieve this are *parody* and *pastiche*. Without commenting on the reasons, I think that Jameson's differentiation of the two concepts according to their respective use of irony is helpful in the present context (cf. Jameson 1993).

In close relation to the death of the subject (cf. above) is the use of intertextuality. According to Broich (in Bertens 1997; 250), novels have always used intertextuality, which has traditionally been conceived of as interaction of both reader and author: while the author could with all reason suppose that the reader knew the intertexts he was alluding to, the reader on her part could suppose the same thing, viz. that the author knew that she knew the intertexts - it was therefore a very conscious relation on behalf of both sides. In postmodernism, a text that is not influenced by intertexts is almost considered to be an impossibility (cf. Barthes metaphor of the text as a 'chambre d'écos'), but the ways in which these intertexts enter the present text need not be conscious to neither author nor reader. And while before postmodernism, the author had a lot to say in what intertexts the reader would be alluded to, these days are gone: the reader is left in a position to decide on her own which of the various possible intertexts she likes to consider (a consideration of all intertexts being in principle no more possible).

Another consequence of the postmodernist use of intertextuality is a questioning of the nature of a given text as a unified whole, because intertextuality 'compartmentalizes' a text into different fragments, which have to be put back together later on.

Postmodernism adopted the narrative technique of self-referentiality from modernism. There are various ways in which a text can allude to itself, but what is special about postmodernist self-referentiality is its concentration on the politics of representation, manifest in its constant questioning of the uses and the status of a given text (postmodernist self-referentiality poses questions such as 'Who's deciding what will be published?' or 'Who's deciding what will become

part of the literary canon?').

It is small wonder that within the project of questioning postmodernism asks whether or not a text has to have a certain direction or orientation. But while 'non-teleological narration' has predominantly been a formalist experiment in modernism, it is being used in postmodernism to subvert the formerly assumed unproblematic nature of representation (cf. Szegedy-Maszák in Bertens 1997, 274 f.). Definitely, metafiction existed before the advent of postmodernism, but what makes postmodernism special is its constant questioning of the 'politics'. As other metafictional novels, postmodernist novels use the 'novel within the novel' technique, but rather to ask questions about the use of representation, and not about what is being represented:

> In metafiction, the novel-within-the-novel device serves to underminde (*sic!*), rather than to establish, the conventional distinctions between the real and the imaginary domains. The teller-within-the-tale constellation shifts the emphasis away from a representation and imitation of reality (...) towards an exploration of the workings of the imagination, of the self-generating story-telling voice, and thus towards a throwing into relief of the literary process. (Imhof 1986; 226)

In postmodernism, intertextuality is not necessarily limited to the incorporation of other texts alone; it is especially in Hutcheon (1988) that we find various examples of other works of art 'intruding' the literary domain.

1. 2. 3. Critical Voices

In the above presentation of the key tenets of postmodernism, two possible attitudes towards them have been prominent: the first (exemplified by Hutcheon) aims at a neutral or dialectical evaluation, while the second (exemplified by Lyotard) is a conscious *laudatio* that favours them. But there are critical voices concerning postmodernism as well.

The theorists opposed to Postmodernism can be subsumed in two categories, the first of which is represented by the German philosopher/sociologist Habermas, for whom the project of modernity is still unfinished. For Habermas, the apparent failure of Enlightenment values such as rationality does not mean that these values have ceased to be of any importance, but rather indicates that we still have to try and realize that metanarrative. For Habermas, the Enlighten-

ment values have not failed, it is simply that we have not yet realized them to the full extent. It is in this sense that for him, the project of modernity is unfinished (cf. e.g. Roberts 2000; 117 f.)

The second group of theorists who take a critical or even hostile attitude towards postmodernism can be labelled as Marxist or Neo-Marxist. One of their more famous representatives is the US critic Frederic Jameson. In both the essay as well as the book version of *Postmodernism, or theCultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Jameson sets out to show that postmodernist art is dominated by two compositional features: the blurring of the distinction of High Art and Popular Culture, and the use of *pastiche* rather than *parody*. As already mentioned above, Jameson thinks that the difference between pastiche and parody is that whereas the latter uses a paratext in order to take an ironic or even sarcastic attitude towards it, pastiche is a purely stylistic device that uses the style of another text without making any comment as far as the content is concerned. It is in this sense that Jameson speaks of the depthlessness of postmodernist art (Roberts 2000; 126 f.).

Being a Marxist theorist, it is hardly surprising that Jameson not only identifies these features of postmodernist art, but also comments on the relationship of postmodernist art towards the society in which it is produced. It is especially the blurring of the distinctions of High Art and Popular Culture which allows Jameson to argue convincingly that postmodernist art is the direct expression of certain tendencies that can be found in Western societies in the era of Late Capitalism. Being a direct product of the socio-economic conditions under which it is produced, postmodernist art naturally reflects the meta-narratives of the societies in which it is produced. At the example of Jameson, we can see that the concept of the Politics of Representation owes a good deal to Marxist literary critics, since it was they who first argued convincingly that art reflects the dominant convictions as well as socio-economic conditions of the societies in which it is produced (for a further example, cf. Eagleton's *Marxism and Literary Criticism* (1976)). But in contrast to Eagleton, who would conclude that since postmodernist art exemplifies the 'cultural logic of Late Capitalism', and thus is counter-revolutionary, Jameson is willing to admit that Late Capitalism simply is the era we happen to live in:

> The point is that we are *within* the culture of postmodernism to the point where its facile repudiation is as impossible as any equally facile celebration of it is complacent and corrupt. Ideological judgement on postmodernism today necessarily implies ... a judgement on ourselves as well as our artefacts. (Jameson quoted in Roberts 2000; 120)

Jameson also reproaches postmodern art for not generating its own principles and theories of production, but in doing so, he evaluates postmodernism with a modernist aesthetic, according to which part of the value of a work of art is the originality of its principles of production - a view which combines aesthetic theory with the metanarrative of development and progress. While this may be true as a diagnosis for the formal organization of a lot of postmodern literature, such a position ignores important features such as the 'politics of representation' as defined by Hutcheon (cf. above) - which I think is a typically postmodern concept, even if it is not always manifest on the level of form.

I hope that this section has indicated that the impulse to look for the socio-economic circumstances as well as the dominant meta-narratives that influence the production of a work of art is at least partly attributable to the arguments of Marxist critics such as Jameson or Eagleton. It is but a small step from realizing that art is produced under certain political conditions towards an art that questions the politics of its own production, as is indicated by Hutcheon's concept of the Politics of Representation.

In the analyses of Fowles' novels, this concept will be identified in each of the novels, but in different forms and with different implications.

2. The Collector

2. 1. Introduction

The Collector, Fowles' first novel published in 1963, quickly became a big success, enabling him to give up his teaching job. As Woodcock notes, Fowles developed the general idea for the novel's plot by synthesising the general idea of a man imprisoning a woman in a cellar from Bartok's opera *Bluebeard's Castle* with a contemporary newspaper report '(...) of a boy who captured a girl and imprisoned her in an air-raid shelter at the end of his garden ... there were many peculiar features about this case that fascinated me.' (Fowles quoted in Woodcock 1984; 27)

From the point of view of narrative technique, the novel is striking because it features not a coherent account of what happens when Clegg (the novel's anti-hero), having won a large amount of money in the lottery, decides to capture Miranda, a beautiful girl from the neighbourhood, and imprison her in the cellar of a countryside house which he managed to buy with the money he had won. What the reader is presented with are two narratives, one by Clegg and one by his victim, Miranda. It is by virtue of this narrative technique, as we will see, that Fowles achieves an opposition of the two points of view which results not only in pointing out the respective motives and goals that can be seen as the determining factors for the specific ways in which those narratives are structured, but also in confusing the reader's moral response to the novel as such.

As the subsequent discussion will show, the politics of representation form what we may call one of the major postmodernist constituents of the novel, but representation is also critically examined from a slightly different perspective. While the novel points out to what degree a personal account (Miranda significantly writes in form of a diary) might be determined by the interests of the narrator, and to what degree the narrator is able to structure and influence what is being represented as text, the two main characters are as well shown as victims of the representative process: highly personal in their own contributions, they tend to misread and misinterpret the narratives of the respective other.

On the level of meaning, as I will argue, the novel presents the reader with two characters. While the reader would expect a condemnation of Clegg as the moral monster he is, the open ending and Miranda's apparent snobbism work to question her morally superior status from the very beginning of her narrative, while it sometimes seems that the novel is more apologetic for Clegg's behaviour than we might be willing to expect.

2. 2. Narrative Technique

As said above, the novel is divided in two parts, both commenting on the general theme of Miranda's imprisonment in very different ways. While both depict from the perspective of an insider the events that are connected to her abduction, it is clear from the start that both narratives also are diametrically opposed to one another.

Clegg, on his behalf, tells us a lot about his social background, how he won the pools, how he first met Miranda and how the idea of abducting her gradually grew within him, as well as providing us with a detailed account of the preparations for the crime. Throughout, the reader may watch his obsession to justify himself, and one of the questions that remain unanswered is before whom does he want to justify himself? As far as the depiction of facts is concerned, Clegg is significantly silent about his own or other people's emotions, concentrating on describing the 'safety measures' he installs to prevent her escape. For him, two more events seem to be worth mentioning: first, Miranda's rying to coax him into having sex with her (*C*; 94 ff.) marks for Clegg the turning point of their relationship; it is literally the point that makes him lose all respect for her, thus justifying him in his decision to force her to pose for the pornographic photos he'll later take of her; second, he misinterprets Miranda's illness, thinking (or rather hoping) that it's a simple cold while in fact it's pneumonia that results in her death. The death of her gives him a new opportunity to develop strategies about what to do now, and he pictures with a lot of detail his plans after her death.

On the other hand, while Clegg is being very technical about Miranda's imprisonment, her account concentrates on the depiction of her emotional dilem-

ma of being torn apart between hating Clegg and feeling sorry for him. Miranda starts her diary at the seventh day of her imprisonment, and in contrast to Clegg, she does not bother the reader with technical details. As in the case of Clegg, the reader is informed about some of the facts about her past, but the intention that hides behind the two narratives is a completely different one: while Clegg writes about his childhood partly to explain and justify his present behaviour, Miranda introspectively explores her past to come to terms with herself as a person, and her account thus appears to be more honest.

Because the interplay between the use of specific narrative techniques and modes and the critique of representation and its politics is very intricate in this novel, I will give each of the two protagonists one subsection of their own.

In *The Collector*, we are presented with a technique that Fowles will apply in consequent novels as well: multiple endings and open endings. As mentioned above, *The Collector* features two points of view, but in four sections, the first two of which - i.e. Clegg's account and Miranda's - constitute most of the novels content. Section three (*C*; 263 ff.), written again by Clegg, presents the reader with his hopeless attempts to cure her illness. It is this section as well in which Clegg develops his idea to dispose of her body by making both her and his death seem like a suicide pact - an ironical version of the happy end that Clegg seems to strive for during much of the novel. But as section four begins (*C*; 279 ff.), this possibility is soon shown to be an illusion, as Clegg cleans the room. Because Clegg himself mentions the possibility that he might capture yet another girl (*C*; 282 f.), it is at best doubtful whether he regrets what he has done. His final statement 'But it is still just an idea. I only put the stove down there today because the room needs drying out anyway' (*C*; 283), merely mentions the possibility, thus raising expectations in the reader that can never be fulfilled because this is exactly the point at which the novel ends. The novel thus exemplifies what Szegedy-Maszák (1997) has labelled 'non-teleological narration', a narrative that does not reach a certain preconceived goal or state of things/affairs. This notion of non-teleology leaves the reader in suspense precisely because it is Clegg who utters these words. As our analysis of him will show, Clegg is a character whose behaviour is often

inconsequential, and it is by virtue of this interpretation that the reader might fear that yet another girl will be imprisoned in the name of literature.

2. 2. 1. Clegg

From the very beginning of the novel, it is clear that Clegg is a person who is retrospectively trying to justify his reprehensible behaviour. In order to achieve this, he is trying to explain all his actions as 'acting for the best of X', where the variable X might be filled by various, even incongruous contents as the novel proceeds. It is interesting here that Clegg deploys this strategy not only to convince whatever addressee his narrative might have, but himself as well. When confessing that part of the inspiration about how to keep a prisoner comes from a book called 'The Secrets of the Gestapo', not only does this mentioning link him with a fascist ideology of power, but it also undermines the apparently altruistic justification he tries to convince others with: 'The first days I didn't want her to read about all the police were doing, and so on, because it would *have only upset* her. It was *almost a kindness*, as you might say.' (*C*; 43 - my emphases) While the validity of Miranda's descriptions and attitudes might be questioned on the grounds of her apparent snobbism, on which I will comment later on, it is clear from the beginning that Clegg is the morally guilty party of the two. While both suffer some form of a representational failure, or a state of mind that does not always allow them to see realistically, it is mainly Clegg who has problems with realistically evaluating the nature and content of his own plans:

> I don't know why I said it. I knew really I could never let her go away. It wasn't just a barefaced lie, though. Often I *did think* she would go away when we agreed, a promise was a promise, etcetera. Other times I knew I couldn't let her do it. (*C*; 46, my emphasis)

The sense in which it might be claimed that Clegg suffers from a representational failure is that he fills the cherished concepts of humanism with perverted meanings and all the wrong associations. Having gagged and bound Miranda, he comments: 'It was very romantic, her head came just up to my shoulder.' (*C*; 50) This false identification happens on the moral side as well, and already the language Clegg uses shows that he is unable to differentiate between what

concepts and ideals are valid for him, and what are valid universally. In an almost characteristic shift of pronoun, Clegg blurs the distinction between what he feels he has to do and what he thinks is generally advisable: 'Perhaps *I* was overstrict, *I* erred on the strict side. But *you had* to be careful' (*C*; 57, my emphasis). It is as well conspicuous that Clegg's representation and evaluation of the facts serve his own ends most; in trying to shun the responsibility for forcing Miranda to pose for pornographic photos, he is trying to appeal to every ever so minor circumstance that might lessen his guilt, a train of thought that can be but the bitter parody of a moral argument:

> I never slept that night, I got in such a state. There were times I thought I would go down and give her the pad again and take other photos, it was as bad as that. I am not really that sort and I was only like it that night because of all that happened and the strain I was under. Also the champagne had a bad effect on me. And everything she said. It was what they call a culmination of circumstances. (...) About what I did, undressing her, when I thought after, I saw it wasn't so bad; not many would have kept control of themselves, just taken photos, it was almost a point in my favour. (*C*; 87)
> What I am trying to say is that it all came unexpected. I know what I did next day* was a mistake, but up to that day I thought I was acting for the best and within my rights. (*C*; 113)

That Clegg takes pornographic photos is significant from a psychological perspective, since the reason he takes them is that they turn the person photographed to an object, and thus exemplify the 'collector-mentality' that is being criticised in a number of Fowles' texts. Clegg is secretly terrified by the contact with other human beings, because they shatter the dream-world he is living in by reminding him that his dream-world has but little to do with reality and it is this shattering that he desperately wants to avoid:

> I could have done anything. I could have killed her. All I did later was because of that night. (...) She was like all women, she had a one-track mind. I never respected her again. It left me angry for days.
> Because I could do it.
> The photographs (the day I gave her the pad), I used to look at them sometimes. I could take my time with them. They didn't talk back at me. That was what she never knew. (*C*; 102f.)

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* he gives her an overdose of tablets against her 'cold'

It is at this very point that the collector mentality can be linked with the concept of the *simulacrum* as defined above, because the collector values the outward appearances of objects more than their intrinsic value: butterfly collectors are interested in the beauty of certain specimens, not in their biological function as put into praxis. Miranda effectively characterises this mentality as desiring something both living and dead at the same time: 'I am one in a row of specimens. It's when I try to flutter out of line that he hates me. I'm meant to be dead, pinned, always the same, always beautiful. He knows that part of my beauty is being alive, but it's the dead me he wants. He wants me living-but-dead.' (*C*; 203) This corresponds to Clegg's own confession that it is mainly the outward and superficial qualities of his 'object' Miranda that interest him: 'She smelt so nice I could have stood like that all the evening. It was like being in one of those adverts come to life'. (*C*; 82)

The collector mentality that Clegg exhibits also corresponds to his criterion for reality; faced with two real events (Miranda's attempt to coax him into having sex with her and him nursing her when she's ill) he defines as real only the second one, largely on the grounds that it comes a lot closer to the ideal he has set up for himself:

> All the part from when she took off her clothes and I no longer respected her, that seemed to be unreal, like we both lost our minds. I mean, her being ill and me nursing seemed more real. (...) I kept on thinking of nice things, how sometimes we got on well and all the things she meant to me back home when I had nothing else. All the part from when she took off her clothes and I no longer respected her, that seemed to be unreal... (*C*; 266)

Clegg exemplifies Hutcheon's thesis of the Politics of Representation in a very obvious manner, and it might not be an exaggeration to claim that even the ideal of a quasi sexless, tendentially platonic and utterly romantic relationship that he projects onto Miranda is erected as a safeguard against the otherwise inevitable discovery of his impotence.

As Clegg's own discourse reveals, the collector mentality is closely linked with the wish to dominate people and to have power over them:

> I don't know why I didn't go then, I tried, but I couldn't, I couldn't face the idea of not knowing how she was, of not being able to see her

> *whenever I wanted*. (*C*; 271, my emphasis)
> I couldn't do anything, I wanted her to live so, and I couldn't risk getting help, I was beaten, anyone would have seen it. All those days I knew I would never love another the same. There was only Miranda for ever. I knew it then. (*C*; 273)

His concept of love is thus one structured by his wish to dominate, and as such exemplifies the Politics of Representation at its most obvious: his descriptions do not reveal anything factual about the outside world, but rather tell us something about his psychological make-up and his interests. The consequence of such an attitude is to appropriate existent patterns of explanation for one's own personal ends, such as when Clegg invokes the discourse of behaviourism to justify his unwillingness to assist his disabled sister Mabel:

> It was like when I had to take Mabel out in her chair. I could always find a dozen reasons to put it off. You ought to be grateful to have legs to push, Aunt Annie used to say (they knew I didn't like being seen out pushing the chair). But it's in my character, it's how I was made. I can't help it. (*C*; 271)

While it seems clear at first sight that Clegg is, in fact, the moral monster of the present novel, and that his own efforts of justifying what he did ultimately reveal only his egoist motives, there is nevertheless a sense in which both the novel and its author seem to exculpate Clegg. After all, much stress is laid on his spoiled childhood. Without positively justifying him, the novel at least mentions some of the sad events of his childhood that might be described as factors over which Clegg has no control (his being nearly orphaned, the psychological terror that his aunt sets up by using his sister Mabel to discipline him and make him feel guilty). Further, any unified interpretation according to which Clegg alone is the morally reprehensible party is foreclosed by the fact that Miranda as well is subject to the Politics of Representation, and by her snobbism, a point I will comment on in the following section.

There is also the suggestion (voiced by Clegg) that more people would do what he has done had they both the means and the opportunity. In this context, it is significant that Clegg has the opportunity by virtue of his winning the lottery. This is by no means a justification of his conduct, no more than his own explanation of why things ended as they have at the end of the novel. Comparing Miranda with his future guest Marian, Clegg sees his former 'failure'

as being conditioned by the social border that separated him from Miranda:

> She isn't as pretty as Miranda, of course, in fact she's only an ordinary common shop-girl, but that was my mistake before, aiming too high, I ought to have seen that I could never get what I wanted from somebody like Miranda, with all her la-di-da ideas and clever tricks. I ought to have got someone who would respect me more. Someone ordinary I could teach. (*C*; 282)

Far from being a justification, as I said, for his conduct, these comments allude to one of the minor themes of the novel, which consists in opposing the different social strata that Clegg and Miranda belong to. While their social backgrounds are manifest in their respective characteristic ways of using language, there is also a fundamental inability (as well as lack of will) to enter (even linguistically) the world of the other in order to understand him - a point I will comment on again when discussing Miranda in the following section.

2. 2. 2. Miranda

As Clegg is the morally reprehensible party of the present novel, it is small wonder that Miranda is its heroine. But as in the case of Clegg, this is a characterisation that, in spite of all its convincing power at first sight, is not reversed, but questioned and undermined in important respects. While Clegg's first comment on Miranda's snobbism is certainly out of place when uttered by a person who has captured her some days before, the second part of his argument (in italics in the following quote) tells us something about Miranda.

> She wasn't la-di-da, like many, but it was there all the same. You could see it when she got sarcastic and impatient with me because I couldn't explain myself or I did things wrong. *Stop thinking about class, she'd say. Like a rich man telling a poor man to stop thinking about money.* (*C*; 41)

As it is clear that Clegg's discourse is structured by his interests, so is it obvious that Miranda is likewise unable to adopt the point of view of someone who does not come from the same social strata as she does. Voiced in meta-narrative terms, she adopts a paternalistic attitude towards Clegg because of her superior intelligence, thus exemplifying the exclusion of unreason or idiocy from those who think themselves as belonging to the community of rational

humans, an exclusion that betrays the use of reason as power, a process that has been identified and analysed in Foucault (1973).

While we might criticise Miranda's apparent snobbism and the paternalistic attitude she adopts when dealing with Clegg, this is not the only interpretation possible. We might as well interpret her insistence that Clegg change his life along existentialist lines. I won't try to paraphrase the structure of the existentialist interpretations here, suffice it to say that most critics see Clegg as a hopelessly inauthentic individual for whom it is almost impossible to achieve personal authenticity while this possibility is principally open to Miranda - possibly at times foreclosed because of her snobbism, but in the end simply not attainable because she doesn't live long enough. She thus possesses the ability that is necessary to take authentic decisions: she can identify what's wrong with both her life as that of other people: '"You have money - as a matter of fact, you aren't stupid, you could become whatever you liked. Only you've got to shake off the past. You've got to kill your aunt and the house you lived in and the people you lived with. You've got to be a new human being."' (*C*; 76) On the other hand, as she becomes aware that her former boyfriend, the artists G.P., is just another instance of the collector mentality (as is argued by Woodcock 1984; 34 f.), she also realizes that she as well has been leading a life of appearances, a situation she cannot change while being confined to Clegg's estate. While she reproaches herself for simply taking over the positions endorsed by G.P. as well as for her snobbism, she seems also unable to overcome it, while on the other hand Clegg really gives her every reason to feel superior to him, and consequently her position as an authentic person is questioned, but never abandoned:

> He makes me change, he makes me want to dance around him, bewilder him, dazzle him, dumbfound him. He's so slow, so unimaginative, so lifeless. Like zinc white. I see it's a sort of tyranny he has over me. He forces me to be changeable, to act. To show off. The hateful tyranny of weak people. G.P. said it once. The ordinary man is the curse of civilization. (*C*; 127)
> 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 fell I've got to show him how decent human beings live and behave. (*C*; 130)

It is interesting that Miranda here voices an argument similar to one of Clegg's, viz. that the divide between them is of both a social and an economical nature.

In contrast to Clegg, Miranda is very aware of the Politics of Representation and this (despite her snobbism) even when it comes to analysing her own preferences and aspirations. Voicing her disgust for the 'ordinary man', she realizes that this disgust is to a large extent motivated by the desire to belong to the supposedly superior social strata: 'I'm vain. I'm not one of them. I *want* to be one of them, and that's not the same thing' (*C*; 209 - emphasis in the original). Being aware of the Politics of Representation also makes her recognize Clegg's inferiority complex and the desire to exculpate himself, which hides behind his supposed 'explanations':

> He loves me desperately, he was very lonely, he knew would always be 'above' him. It was awful, he spoke so awkwardly, he always has to say things in a roundabout way, he always has to justify himself at the same time.' (*C*; 122)

The narrative technique used in the respective contributions of both Clegg and Miranda appear not only on the level of speech, attributing Clegg to a working-class background with a general lack of education, and linking Miranda with the upper social layers. As demonstrated, they also help to characterise the fundamental principles of the Politics of Representation, and especially so in the case of Miranda. In the present context, it is significant that she writes in the form of a diary, a genre where writer and reader traditionally coincide and which is not meant for other eyes. What is important here is that this form also allows Miranda to denigrate and to ridicule Clegg, since he has no way of reacting to the discourse of her diary, and the diary thus constitutes one of the last domains where Miranda effectively stays in power while betraying at the same time her personal shortcomings and prejudices.

2. 2. 3. Reason, Power and the Politics of Representation

We have seen in the preceding sections that both main characters of *The Collector* exemplify the Politics of Representation as defined by Hutcheon. That they are an important theme within the present novel can't be disputed and is easily demonstrable not only by analysing the respective narrative techniques that Fowles uses for his characters, but also by the frequency with which they are alluded to. But the attitude of the two characters is fundamentally different. For Clegg, the only purpose of a story is its capacity to explain (and he always uses 'explain' in the sense of 'justify') what has happened. 'I've always hated to be found out, I don't know why, I've always tried to explain, I mean invent stories to explain.' (*C*; 32) This is in keeping with his collector mentality, while for Miranda, as we will see, aesthetic categories, as well as personal freedom and authenticity, play a much more important role.

The important fact to be remembered here is that both characters suffer from a distorted perception of reality, due in both cases to their interests and preferences. But it is not always clear that every misinterpretation that Clegg advances is really due to his interests. For example, he says about the severly ill Miranda: 'It was not my fault. How was I to know she was iller than she looked? She just looked like she had a cold' (*C*; 110), and the reader is in no privileged position to ascertain whether this evaluation is due to his desire to keep Miranda, or due to an already obvious paranoia that he has doubtlessly by the time he writes his retrospective account. There are two further metanarratives which structure the respective accounts of Clegg and Miranda in ways similar to the processes of the Politics of Representation.
As already mentioned, Clegg's language is often cold and devoid of emotional content, and this has certainly a connection with the collector mentality he exhibits. Miranda, on the other hand, is very conscious about the Politics of Representation, and she does adopt a rather aestheticist attitude to life (which, in existentialist terms, might be seen as a sign of her in authenticity) and positively confesses cheating over some parts of the dialogues in her diary: '(I'm cheating, I didn't say all these things - but I'm going to write what I want to say as well as what I did).' (*C*; 133)

As we have seen, Fowles is very considerate in trying to realize the Politics of Representation on the formal level of language as well, hereby adhering to his statement that he wrote *The Collector* 'in the strictest possible realism'. This might go for the organization of the two main characters ways of using language (and especially for Clegg's violations of the rules of grammar), but on the level of content, it remains doubtful what realism actually is. Miranda is very aware of the danger that the reality that surrounds her during her imprisonment might soon become the only reality that she can remember, thus pushing out of the way other realities. She tries to counter this danger by thinking about G.P. who is not with her in reality, but in some sense is much more a real presence to her than Clegg, but on the other hand, Clegg is her reality in the last two months of her life:

> His inhibition. It's absurd. I talked to him as if he could easily be normal. As if he wasn't a maniac keeping me prisoner here. But a nice young man who wanted a bit of chivvying from a jolly girl-friend. It's because I never see anyone else. He becomes the norm. I forget to compare. (*C*; 189)

As a last point, I'd like to mention that not only the two protagonists of the novel have to face problems of representation and of determining what sort of phenomena might hide behind the appearances. Throughout the whole novel, and while it is clear that Clegg bears the moral responsibility for Miranda's death, the reader does not know why exactly Miranda died: the most likely answer is that he gave her an overdose of sleeping tablets, but because he himself is unsure about the quantity, as readers, we simply don't know:

> I never had a worse night, it was so terrible I can't describe it. She couldn't sleep, I gave her *as many sleeping tablets as I dared* but they seemed to have no effect, she would doze off a little while and then she would be in a state again, trying to get out of bed (once she did before I could get to her and fell to the floor). (*C*; 267 - my emphasis)

For the final interpretation of Miranda's death, the reader is referred to his own construct of the events in the house of Clegg (which might in turn be influenced by the reader's preferences).

We have already mentioned that *The Collector* sometimes assumes a tone that might be mistaken for an apology of the outrageous act Clegg commits; as such, Clegg's self-characterisation as a 'victim of circumstance' is at least partly invoked, if not totally accepted. Fowles' choice of presenting us with Miranda's diary further strengthens identification with the novel's anti-hero, since by the time he is reading the diary, the reader is in the same position as he must imagine Clegg to be upon finding it. As Olshen (quoted in Woodcock 1984) has found out, Fowles originally planned to present the two accounts in simple sequence. The form that the novel has finally taken (i.e. the enclosure of Miranda's diary in Clegg's narrative) further strengthens this complicity, because Clegg now has the last words. As Woodcock mentions, 'Clegg's emotional and sexual fascism is common to all Fowles' male characters, though it differs in degree of intensity and overtness.' (Woodcock 1984; 30) He sustains this point by pointing out that, if different in the actual manifestation, G.P. shares with Clegg the same attitude towards women, which might be called collector mentality; thus Miranda's first interpretation (according to which G.P. is diametrically opposed to Clegg) undergoes a severe change as she realizes that fundamentally, the original behaviour pattern of both men is not so very different at all.

It is in this respect that the reader can identify with Miranda, since for the reader, Clegg first seems to be a moral monster, and only later does (s)he realize that possibly, some of the factors that might have played an important role in him becoming the kind of person we experience while we are reading this novel are really out of his control. While I recommend that any normal person's sympathies lie with Miranda, her snobbism also undermines the desired identification, while we may at times feel compassion for Clegg. It is in this respect that the fact that Miranda's narrative is presented in the form of a diary is significant. While the diary allows for identification with the sad fate of Miranda as we read it, it also puts us in much the same position as Clegg:

> Because of the conventional assumption in the diary form that the writer is the only reader (or, as Miranda says, that she is 'talking to

> herself'), we must assume that we are getting a very private glimpse into the innermost thoughts and feelings of the diarist. We are thus ironically required to imagine ourselves in an analogous role to Clegg's, the role of the voyeur, reading what was never intended for us to read, and gaining vicarious enjoyment from this experience. (Olshen quoted in Woodcock 1984)

Woodcock rightly asks (1984; 39) whether such enjoyment might not be limited to the male readership of the novel, but the important point here is that by using specific narrative techniques, Fowles forecloses identification with the novel's heroine, while at the same time allowing for an identification with the character that least invites it. He also mentions that one of the possible reasons for such a strategy might be the fact that Fowles himself is a male author, and as such he might be aware of, but unable to influence, the Politics of Representation:

> Beyond Fowles's use of self-conscious fictionality, however, there remains his own masculine position from which he cannot escape as a male writer despite his self-critical awareness. This gender bias is present in the book without our needing to ascribe any of its content directly to Fowles: it is there in the way the book is structured and built. (Woodcock 1984; 38)

Fowles' *The Collector* adopts once again an attitude of complicity and critique: while the anti-hero can sometimes be identified with, the character of the novel's heroine is at least questioned. While literary modernism projected the difficult-to-identify-with hero as a safeguard against identificatory strategies of reading (in order to fully reveal the status of the work of art as such)**, literary postmodernism plays with the identificatory strategies in a way that leaves no doubt that those strategies have at least lost there innocence. As a consequence, the reader has to think for herself whether or not to take her initial evaluation of the main characters at face value. The critique of representation is here imminently linked with a critique of interpretation, which may belie the same Politics as the former.

** I owe this point to T. Voß, communicated in oral conversation 2002

2. 2. 4. Intertextuality and the Critique of Metanarratives

As mentioned in the introductory section, one of the key tenets of both postmodern philosophy as well as literary postmodernism is the fact that both try to question the key values of Western societies. In this respect, both Miranda and Clegg are not only individual characters, but they also sym bolize different theoretical constructs. In the preceding section, we have already seen that Clegg's sexual fascism is not confined to his person, but a character trait that we will encounter again and again as we read other Fowles novels.

Other than a sexual fascist, Clegg is the embodiment of what above has been labelled 'collector mentality'. For him, living beings are at best objects to be possessed and understood. This is precisely the sense in which Clegg would presumably define rationality: adherence to argumentative standards that allow him to objectify and to reify. His frequent invocations of allegedly scientific methods and plans prove this point: 'I did it scientific. I planned what had to be done and ignored my natural feelings.' (*C*; 282) As will be seen in other novels, it is precisely this lack of natural feelings that Fowles criticises about the scientific, positivist worldview. No doubt that the perverted thinking of Clegg makes his appeal to scientific standards utterly ironic, but the point here is that the scientific world-view is not *per se* humanist - although the value of humanism as a philosophical concept is also questioned.

Miranda, on the other hand, is not so much impressed by quasi-scientific analyses and explanations. As her reactions to Clegg's presents for her show, she is an aestheticist and has - in contrast to Clegg - a real sense of beauty: 'Three Indian mats and a beautiful deep purple, rose-orange and sepia white-fringed Turkish carpet (he said it was the only one 'they' had, so no credit to his taste).' (*C*; 130) 'I've broken all the ugly ashtrays and pots. Ugly ornaments don't deserve to exist. (...) He is ugliness. But you can't smash human ugliness.' (*ibid.*) Other than an aestheticist, Miranda is also a humanist in the sense that she believes in a fundamental human capacity to behave rational and to learn to become a better human being. At first, she tries to 'reform' Clegg by correcting

him and giving him some advice, thus exhibiting her still existent belief in personal development:

> 'You have money - as a matter of fact, you aren't stupid, you could become whatever you liked. Only you've got to shake off the past. You've got to kill your aunt and the house you lived in and the people you lived with. You've got to be a new human being.' (*C*; 76)

As is shown already by the choice of the name 'Miranda' and by her calling Clegg 'Caliban' in her diary, one of the important intertexts for *The Collector* is Shakespeare's *Tempest,* especially the four protagonists Prospero, Caliban, Miranda, and Ferdinand. While there seems to be no Ferdinand to 'save' Miranda, the other characters from the play are linked with the two protagonists in the *Collector*, but not in the form of a 1:1 correspondence. Miranda's belief in the possibility of man to change his own life and to learn to become a better human being makes her similar to Prospero, who teaches Caliban. Like Prospero, she is sometimes set aback as her efforts prove fruitless. As far as the categorization of characters is concerned, the reader's expectations sometimes will be frustrated. Clegg's Christian name Ferdinand links him with the character of Shakespeare's play (which makes sense, because he wants to be Ferdinand to Miranda), but it is Miranda herself who proposes a different identification: "'Ferdinand," she said. "They should have called you Caliban.'" (*C*; 61) '(...) I have to give him a name. I'm going to call him Caliban.' (*C*; 130) Clegg is identified with Caliban by Miranda, but Clegg also shares some features traditionally ascribed to Prospero, because it is he who exerts the most powerful influence over his 'domain'. As such, the theme of double imprisonment, which is thematized in *The Tempest* (Prospero is a prisoner as well as an imprisoner: his prison is the exile of the island, and he imprisons Caliban - who is both a prisoner of Prospero as well as of his own wildness) is reiterated in *The Collector*: Clegg holds Miranda in captivity, but as perceptive people like Miranda can see, he is very much a prisoner of his own, self-constructed world view: "'You're the one imprisoned in a cellar," she said. Do you believe, I asked. "Of course I do. I'm a human being.'" (*C*; 58f.)

The Tempest thus serves as an important intertext to *The Collector*, but not in a way that would allow for an easy categorization of the characters into the categories set up by the intertext. This is obvious when looking at G.P.; while he is in a number of ways like Ferdinand (at least as far as Miranda's sometimes idealistic appreciation of him is concerned), his very absence forecloses such an interpretation.

It might be argued that the above-mentioned frustration of the readers' expectations as far as one-to-one correspondences between the characters of *The Collector* and *The Tempest* are concerned works mainly for the male characters. As we will see, Miranda partly supports such an interpretation.

Another important intertext for the present novel is Jane Austen's *Emma*, which Miranda explicitly refers to a couple of times. At the hand of this intertext, another fundamental character trait of Miranda might be worked out: her tendency to identify too much with the characters of literature. Pondering about the constellation of the male characters in *Emma*, she finds herself asking: '*Emma*. The business of being between inexperienced girl and experienced woman and the awful problem of *the* man. Caliban is Mr Elton. Piers is Frank Churchill. But is G.P. Mr Knightley?' (*C*; 218) An answer to this question would presuppose that Miranda be comparable to Emma, a presupposition she is willing to engage in: 'I sent him away after supper and I've been finishing *Emma*. I *am* Emma Woodhouse. I feel for her, of her and in her. I have a different sort of snobbism, but I understand her snobbism.' (*C*; 157)

While the identification of herself with Emma is easy, if not natural, for Miranda herself, it is not necessarily so for the reader. After all, the reader of Fowles' novels has got used to the fact that a too great indulgence in identifying with characters from other novels is a form of behaviour that belies a fundamental trait of character: that of living too much by preconceived ideals, instead of ones own standards - in short, of becoming inauthentic. This is true for Miranda as well, since she is living too much in the realm of the fiction with which she surrounds herself. This keeping to literary standards might be reconciled with her aestheticist world view (cf. above), but the more important point here is that Miranda realises the limits of her proposed humanism: 'Prospero's con-

tempt for him. His knowing that being kind is useless.' (*C*; 245) Not only can Miranda be likened to Prospero in her contempt for 'their beastly Calibanity' (*C*; 206) - she also sets up the discourse of the 'Many' and the 'Few' that Fowles developed at more length in *The Aristos (A)*. Simplified to the extreme, the position Fowles adopts there is one of a hardly concealed elitism, in which the possibility to become existentially authentic is reserved to a relatively small number of a society' individuals. In her snobbism, Miranda is as much a propagator as a victim of this elitist philosophy, and her own characterisation of the elect (in terms too traditional for somebody as enlightened as she is) may induce us to believe that she is *not* part of the elite to which she wants to belong:

> It's true. He is the Old Man of the Sea. I can't stand stupid people like Caliban with their great deadweight of pettiness and selfishness and meanness of every kind. And the few have to carry it all. The doctors and the teachers and the artists - not that they haven't their traitors, but what hope there is, is with them - with us. Because I'm one of them. (*C*; 206)

As a consequence of the intertextual strategies employed (and the above examples have no pretension of being an exhaustive list), the text both installs and then subverts possible identifications of the two protagonists with literary intertexts***; and *via* this identification, the humanism as well as the elitist version of it propagated by Miranda, are critically undermined. All this is in keeping with the anti-identificatory strategies about which we talked in the preceding section. While an identification-oriented reader would naturally side with Miranda, her snobbism and elitism make it very hard to do so.

As the text works to criticise an attitude that tries to derive behaviour patterns for real life from fiction (as does Miranda), it can be inferred that neither of the two protagonists is meant to be a model character for any reader that happens to read the novel. On the level of meta-fictionality, we might say that both Miranda and Clegg serve as models for two types of readers: Miranda is the identifying reader, sometimes confusing the plot of a novel with a recipe for how to behave in real life, while Clegg is somebody who has blocked every hu-

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*** Besides *The Tempest* and *Emma*, there are of course Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*.

man emotion by adopting a radical version of the Collector Mentality; consequently, it is natural that he is unable to identify with the hero of a novel:

> M. I gave you that book to read because I thought you would feel identified with him. You're a Holden Caulfield. He doesn't fit anywhere and you don't.
> C. I don't wonder, the way he goes on. He doesn't try to fit.
> M. He tries to construct some sort of reality in his life, some sort of decency. (*C*; 205)

I have limited the discussion here to two of the novels *direct intertexts*, because I think that the various functions of intertexts in *The Collector* can be worked out at the hand of a few examples. The most important functions of intertextuality here are: first, to set up possible interpretations about the central characters, which are subverted later on; second, to both install and subvert identification with both characters and third, to reveal and to criticise the fundamentally humane discourse of literature.

3. The Magus

3. 1. Introduction

There are two versions of *The Magus*. In the present discussion, I will only make use of the second, revised version, on the grounds that Fowles himself has avowed to be unsatisfied with the formal realization of the first (cf. Acheson 1998; 19).

The Magus is first of all classifiable as a story of initiation. Its protagonist, the twen Nicholas Urfe, has just about finished his higher education as he encounters the opportunity of getting a teaching post in Greece. In keeping with his rather inconsequential and irresponsible behaviour towards women, he accepts the post, which also offers him a comfortable way of dropping his girlfriend Alison. He has little contact with his colleagues, but he meets the fascinating Maurice Conchis, definitely the character that is implied by the novels title. In a series of riddles and sometimes occult experiences, Conchis is trying to teach Nicholas what existential authenticity is about (something that Nicholas has profoundly misunderstood, as we will see in the following section), and that

the general mystery of this world can never be captured in whatever categories we consider appropriate. At the end of the novel, there is continuing uncertainty about whether Nicholas has really achieved existential authenticity, while there is no doubt that he knows very well what it is all about.

So much for the content of the novel. Any full analysis of the novel's complex content would come close to simply paraphrasing it, and the above summary is meant only to set the frame for the discussions. Other elements of the content of *The Magus* will be mentioned only when they are pertinent to the interpretation.

There are three topics which I would like to identify and to discuss in *The Magus*. The first is the critique of representation, a topic we are already familiar with. In the present novel, there are two aspects that merit closer analysis, one of which is the closer analysis of how Nicholas (who 'writes' in the first person) represents himself both at the beginning and the end of the novel, and how this representation exemplifies the Politics of Representation as defined by Linda Hutcheon. The other aspect is an analysis of some exemplary experiences that Conchis confronts Nicholas with, and a discussion of what they are supposed to represent to Nicholas. The second topic is the intertextual organization of the novel, which is linked to the critique of representation in that the intertexts mentioned give rise to certain interpretations on behalf of both Nicholas and the reader, which are frustrated or at least shattered. The third topic is a discussion that takes up some aspects discussed at the hand of *The Collector*: we will discuss the 'Collector Mentality' as a typically male pattern of behaviour, as well as see how the novel both inscribes and subverts this metanarrative of masculinity.

3. 2. The Politics of Autobiography

Having some literary ambitions of his own, it is small wonder that there are a lot of characters that Nicholas Urfe describes as he tells us about one important period of his life, the time he spent of Phraxos. Significantly, the two characters that he spends the majority of time on depicting in a very detailed manner are both men: himself and Maurice Conchis. From the point of view of

narrative technique it is striking that while he is obsessed with women, the really important person for Nicholas (other than Alison, as he will realize only later) is another man. One explanation for this curious concentration might be found in the temporal organization of the novel. It is quite obvious that Nicholas is writing about his life retrospectively, i.e. after he has presumably learnt the lesson that Conchis is trying to teach him. Consequently, there are always two points of time that are explicitly or implicitly referred to in the novel: the time of the events he is describing, and the time of the writing itself. It is because of this temporal organization that Nicholas has a chance at all of adopting a critical attitude towards his former behaviour, but he seems honest enough to allow us some glimpses into his former way of thinking and talking about women. Talking about his then girl-friend Alison, he ungallantly tells an acquaintance that he had stayed with her because she is '[c]heaper than central heating' (M; 36), thus trying to create a mask of emotional detachment for the benefit of both himself and the 'London friend' he was talking to.

In contrast to Nicholas, Alison not only behaves according to her own ideas and values instead of trying to cast herself in a preconceived role for the benefit of others, but she also sees through the pretences of Nicholas:

> I drove some way before she spoke again.
> 'You treated me as if I didn't really belong to you.'
> 'Don't be silly.'
> 'As if I'm a bloody abo.'
> 'Rubbish.'
> 'In case my pants fell down or something.'
> 'It's so difficult to explain.'
> 'Not to me, sport. Not to me.' (M; 36)

By the time he is writing, however, Nicholas has learnt to adopt a more critical attitude towards his past behaviour. Talking about the fascination that existentialism had for him in his student days, Nicholas is aware that they didn't understand what existentialism was all about, for they tried to simply imitate the heroes of the existentialist novels they were reading, 'mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour.' (M; 17) During his stay on Phraxos, one of the things that Nicholas will learn is that such an attitude is not apt to promote the existential authenti-

city he is striving for. The theme is recurrent in Fowles' fiction: the fact that a character is taking the hero of a novel as a role model is a sign of his/her inauthenticity in existential terms. As we have seen, a like analysis is pertinent for Miranda in *The Collector*. After the experiences on Phraxos and later on in Europe, Nicholas has not only realised that his existentialist orientation had been misguided, but he also admits that it served the purpose of justifying his technique of first seducing and then dropping a woman or a girl: 'Only in retrospect does he see that he was perverting existentialism to his own ends, and that in doing this he was mistaken.' (Acheson 1998; 21) The existentialist mask is only one of the various roles that Nicholas adopts to justify his own behaviour. Unable to see through his own pretences, he continues in a similar vein during his first days in Greece:

> At half-term I went with Demetriades to Athens. He wanted to take me to his favourite brothel, in a suburb. He assured me the girls were clean. I hesitated, then - isn't it a poet's, to say nothing of a cynic's, moral duty to be immoral? - I went.' (M; 54)

In contrast to Nicholas, Alison is a lot more aware of the realities that surround them both. When she comes to Athens to meet him, and he tells her about the mysterious experiences he had on Phraxos, she advances a very plausible explanation for the fact that Nicholas considers his experiences to be mysterious:

> 'All that mystery balls. You think I fall for that? There's some girl on your island and you want to lay her. That's all. But of course that's nasty, that's crude. So you tart it up. As usual. Tart it up so it makes you seem the innocent one, the great intellectual who must have his experience. Always both ways. Always cake and eat it. Always - ' (M; 274)

During his stay on Phraxos, Conchis will try to make Nicholas learn what greater personal authenticity is all about - a goal that seems to be only attainable if Nicholas learns that being authentic means to see through the roles and masks that are commonly adopted in 'real life'. For this purpose, Nicholas' still naive concept of representation has to be shattered, it seems. Conchis employs three procedures to do so: first, he provides Nicholas with literary clues during his stay in Phraxos; second, he mounts special

experiences for him, often of an indeterminate symbolic nature, which Nick will mistake for riddles to be solved; and third, Conchis tells him significant episodes from his own life. I will analyse the literary clues when it comes to discussing the intertextual elements of the novel.

3. 3. We Shall not Cease from Exploration...

The first 'experience' that Nicholas has on the island might malevolently be interpreted as a direct result of his above-mentioned decision to see himself as both poet and cynic and to act accordingly: his diagnosed syphilis by Dr Patarescu, one of the island's doctors (M; 59). Later on, Conchis will tell him that this initial diagnosis was false, and that Nicholas needn't have bought the expensive medicine on Athens's Black Market. As readers, we are confronted with a first experience that might be characterised as symbolic: the disease is a symbol for the moral character Nicholas' decision. But as we learn later, symbols might be deceiving, and the first interpretation is not always the correct one.

A similar instance is provided by the works of art that Conchis has surrounded himself with, and with which he doesn't hesitate to try and impress Nicholas. Having some poetic aspirations himself, Nicholas sometimes is prone to adopt an aestheticist attitude. As Conradi has argued, the mentioning of the various works of art at least partly has the effect to give authenticity to Conchis in the eyes of Nicholas: 'Art authenticates Conchis for Urfe and disturbs his own sense of mastery.' (Conradi 1982; 46) When he later learns (M; 581) that a lot of the artefacts in Conchis' house have been forgeries, two things become clear: first, Nicholas has misinterpreted the meaning of the artefacts; and second, he has done so partly because he wanted to believe and perpetuate the impression of Conchis he first created.

From Nicholas own perspective, the experiences he undergoes on Phraxos have a most baffling nature indeed. This becomes especially obvious at the hand of the two twins, first introduced as Lily and Julie, later on referred to as Julie and June. First, he doesn't know that there are two young women on the island, which gives Conchis a good opportunity of playing some tricks on Nicholas' behalf, thus paralleling a strategy with which we are familiar from

Shakespeare: the theme of the two twins who are mistaken for each other. During the course of his stay on the island, Conchis presents Nicholas with a lot of symbols, or elements of a symbolic quality. Nicholas' first response is quite natural: he tries to adopt a rather scientific attitude, trying to decipher the hidden meaning of these symbols, 'the reality behind the mystery.' (M; 157) This is in keeping with his sexual 'politics', because as in the case of women, Nicholas is interested in maintaining his power in the epistemological field as well: trying to emotionally prey on women (M; 16 and 431 f. for example), he is, like Clegg and so many other of Fowles' male heroes, a typical example of the Collector Mentality.

The Collector Mentality becomes obvious in Nicholas' various attempts to make sense of what' happening to him, but one of the fundamental lessons of Conchis seems to be that there are no answers to the questions Nicholas asks:

> 'I'd enjoy it all more if I knew what it meant.'
> That pleased him. He sat back and smiled.
> 'My dear Nicholas, man has been saying what you have just said for the last ten thousand years. And the one common feature of all the gods he has said it to is that not one of them has ever returned an answer.' (M; 185)

The above statement is indeed a very pertinent characterisation of what is elsewhere described as the *Godgame*, which is a recurring theme in Fowles' fiction in much the same way as is the Collector Mentality. It is linked inseparably with the theme of existential authenticity, because it is the very absence of God which guarantees human freedom - a freedom that is bought at the price of having no fundamental explanations for the world's state of affairs.

Contrary to this, Nicholas, at the beginning of the novel and through most of its development, shows himself to believe in a naive representational scheme, in which riddles can be solved and symbols stand for something definite and definable; but at the same time, he exhibits, as we have already seen, some of the basic characteristics of the Politics of Representation. The purpose of Conchis' game, then, seems to be to discourage Nicholas from using his usual conceptual scheme: '"Mr Conchis, I don't know what you're trying to tell me."

"Not to jump to conclusions."' (M; 170) He does so by baffling him with explanations that violate Nicholas' criterion of reality, and sometimes inducing him to believe that Conchis has indeed supernatural powers: ' "I have lived a great deal in other centuries." "You mean in literature?" "In reality."' (M; 105 f.) In combination with the various other tricks employed by Conchis and his crew, it is hardly surprising that Nicholas' sense of reality is profoundly disturbed by the middle of the novel: 'It's just that over there ... I sit in class and wonder whether this side of the island even exists. If it isn't all a dream.' (M; 362)

Within the novel, there is at least some sense of progress in the development of Nicholas as a character. If we accept Huffaker's thesis that '[l]ike Jung's methods, various ancient rites confront an initiate with so many symbols that he becomes aware of what is in his unconscious mind' (Huffaker 1980; 63), by the middle of the novel, Nicholas has learned at least in theory what the Politics of Representation are all about:

> So we talked about Nicholas: his family, his ambitions, his failings. *The third person is apt*, because I presented a sort of fictional self to them, a victim of circumstances, a mixture of attractive raffishness and essential inner decency. (M; 347 f. - my emphasis)

This is one of the very places within the novel where it becomes clear that not only Nicholas, but the reader as well, is not meant to take things at face value. While we might be induced to infer from the above self-characterisation of Nicholas that he has made some progress, the ambivalent ending of the novel might shatter this interpretation. After all, by the end of the book it is by no means clear that Nicholas has seen through, as well as given up, not only the cheating when describing himself, but the Collector Mentality as well. The Collector Mentality occupies Nicholas for a good deal of the third part of the novel as well, since he tries to find both Alison as well as - in keeping with the Sadeian epigraph of the third part - find out how Conchis and his crew have fared since there departure from Phraxos. The detective work that Nicholas does exhibits once again the Collector Mentality, it is essentially an activity to maintain or to regain power over the confusing nature of events and experiences. Its success is, at best, ambivalent. A lot of the symbols that Nicholas had

considered to be authentic are revealed to be but forgeries. As an outstanding example, I will but mention the supposed death of Alison, authenticitated by some newspaper cuttings. While Nicholas original belief had been that these cuttings had been authentic, with the resultant distress for Alison's supposed suicide, he has to learn that Conchis was able to manipulate even those representational media whose authenticity is normally taken for granted (M; 396 f.). As he later investigates almost all the possible clues he can gather about both Conchis and his crew, as well as the persons referred to by them, he has to learn that a good deal of what he had taken to be authentic and real is but forged (e.g. M; 578). On the other hand, his investigations yield some results, and he is at least able to find Lily de Seitas, mother to June and Julie. Since a lot of his detective work consists in examining texts, the point will be taken up again in the next subsection.

Here, it needs to be pointed out that, as some of the interpretations of the symbols and experiences he's confronted with collapse while others again are confirmed, it becomes obvious that he believes some of the interpretations that he advances not because of their inner plausibility, but because they are in keeping with Nicholas preferences. Rommerskirchen has analysed this phenomenon for the exemplary situation of Julie's revelation that both she and her sister are actresses hired by Conchis. Nicholas is prone to believe this explanation because it comes close to his own preconception of seeing women in terms of the madonna/whore complex (a very prominent theme in Fowles' fiction):

> [H]e uses his images of Lily-Julie and Alison to confirm the images he has created of each other: in Alison's behaviour he always sees the complete opposite of the way he believes Lily-Julie would behave. Becoming aware, then, of the impossibility of comparing the two, he nevertheless tries to see in [Lily-Julie] the exact opposite of the provoking behaviour that according to his point of view characterizes Alison, thus stylizing Lily-Julie to a pure angelic figure (...)
> (Rommerskirchen 1999; 64)

In analogy to the Politics of Representation, we find here an instance of the Politics of Interpretation, an issue that will be discussed in more detail in the following subsection, in which the symbolic power and meaning of some of the novel's

most important intertext will be analysed.

Two things might be worth mentioning: first, the reader is in a position very similar to Nicholas, because (s)he is able to assess the relevance as well as the nature of Conchis' symbols only as Nicholas tells him/her about it. Epistemologically, then, the reader has no advantage over Nicholas, and as we shall see in the following section as well, it might be that the reader shares Nicholas ideology as well. At least for the male readers of the novel, it is plausible that some of them will identify with Nicholas. If they do this while keeping an eye on the critical attitude the novel takes towards representation, interpretation and their respective politics, they will be able to undergo a disintoxication not unsimilar to that of Nicholas, making them question their own politics. Second, it should be noted that the world that Conchis creates for Nicholas is a world of forgeries. But the forgeries are so well made that he (and probably the reader as well) takes them to be the real thing. This becomes apparent, to name but one example, when they discuss Conchis' 'dabbling' in psychology:

> 'As I understood the Norwegian story, you rejected science.
> Yet apparently you went into psychiatry.'
> He gave a little shrug. 'I dabbled in it.'
> 'That glimpse I had of your papers suggested more than dabbling.'
> 'They were not by me. The title pages were not genuine.'
> I had to smile then: the curtly dismissive way in which he made such statements had become an almost sure sign that they were not to be believed. (M; 410)

The world that Conchis creates might consequently be described as an instance of the *simulacrum* as depicted by Baudrillard. This becomes especially obvious because it is the title pages of scientific journals that authenticate Conchis for Nicholas, whose criterion for the evaluation of Conchis' psychological knowledge is not the explanatory value of his theories, but rather the form in which they are presented. As Conchis tells him that the title pages were forgeries, it is significant that Nicholas infers from the way Conchis states his case that he is not to be believed. Once again it is *form rather than content* which determines what is taken for reality. The above passage surely has a double bind, because for the reader as well (who, at this stage of the novel, might be as

baffled as Nicholas), the 'curtly dismissive way' of which Nicholas speaks might be an indication of the fact that Conchis has not told the truth; but then, the reader has to be aware that the description 'curtly dismissive' is already an interpretation of Nicholas. The narrative strategies employed by both Conchis and Fowles thus help to show that any apprehension of what can be called 'reality' for any given person is first and foremost a construct that reflects the personal point of view, as well as the interests of, that particular person.

The theme of psychiatry and psychology is taken up once again in the trial scene at the end of the book, and once again it has a double status. While the diagnosis he is given is explicable in terms of the emotional insecurity and the objectifying attitude he adopts when confronted with women, and thus sustains the impression that not only Conchis, but his fellow 'actors' as well have some psychological knowledge, nevertheless the trial scene is a bitter parody of psychological jargons and an instance of the very same Collector Mentality exhibited by the patient himself. There is consequently an ambiguity in the moral sense: why should people who are exhibiting the same Collector Mentality that they want to treat in their 'patient' be justified doing so? The most obvious answer: is to hold up a mirror to him, that he may see what he's doing. We will take up this point once again, from a more general perspective, when we will ask whether or not Nicholas is treated brutally by Conchis, and if the means to make him more aware of himself can be justified.

3. 4. Intertextuality and the Politics of Interpretation

In *The Magus*, intertextuality plays, as we will shortly see, a significant role. There are different formal realizations of intertextuality to be found here. In contrast to the explanations given in section 1 of the present study, the various intertextual references can not only be grouped according to the way in which they relate to an intertext as far as the function is concerned. For Jameson, and Hutcheon following, the basic forms of intertextuality are *parody* and *pastiche*, and the difference between the two concepts is one of the ironic function. As Jameson has argued, *pastiche* is emptied of content. In *The Magus*, we can

categorize intertextual elements according to another criterion. As we will see, it matters very much whether or not is present to both the characters and the reader(s), and also whether an intertext present only to the reader is explicitly mentioned in the text or not. As we will see, Fowles even incorporated intertexts into the revised version of the novel in order to make one of the intertexts present to Nicholas. My interpretation, which tries to show that even as Nicholas is very hermeneutically trying to make sense of what is happening to him, he is nevertheless interpreting the intertexts according to his own preferences, and thus 'using' them rather than 'interpreting' them (to quote two concepts introduced by Eco in his *I Limiti dell'Interpretazione*).

3. 4. 1. Intertextuality - Case 1

In this subsection, I will analyse cases of intertextuality which are directly present to the characters in the text, mostly so by being explicitly mentioned by one of them. By extension, they are also present to the readers.

3. 4. 1. 1. Prospero's Books

I have chosen the title to this subsection in analogy to Peter Greenaway's film adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Books are of a central importance to Prospero, and this seems to be true of Conchis as well. It is Conchis himself who introduces *The Tempest* as a direct intertext for *The Magus*:

> He went on before I could answer. 'Come now. Prospero will show you his domaine.'
> As we went down the steps to the gravel I said, 'Prospero had a daughter.'
> 'Prospero had many things.' He turned a dry look on me. 'And not all young and beautiful, Mr Urfe.' (M; 83)

The parallel between Conchis and Prospero is one that is developed at some length in the novel, and Conchis shares some important qualities with Shakespeare's magician: he seems to be able to manipulate not only the environment and the facts that actually take place in his 'domain', but he also seems to have control over some of the actions of the people who are part of that domain.

While the identification of Conchis and Prospero almost goes without saying, there are also pointers toward the fact that such an interpretation stands on shaky ground. After all, there are three women central to the story: the twins Lily and Julie and, of course, Alison. As his pursuit of Julie/Lily makes clear, Nicholas is willing to accept the Prospero parallel largely on the grounds that he wants to cast himself as Ferdinand, a projection that would eventually result in him 'getting' either Julie or Lily, thereby exemplifying that he has not yet learnt to see literature as a symbol instead of a recommended behaviour pattern. We can also see that his own interpretation of the Prospero situation is largely motivated by his sexual desire for the mysterious two women.

Another instance that illustrates this point is the explicit discussion of Nick and Conchis about the *Tempest*-parallel. Because he feels treated badly by Conchis, Nick is more often than not willing to assign him some of the qualities of Caliban, while he sees at the same time that Conchis cannot live up to that ideal:

> 'You make a rotten Caliban.'
> 'Then perhaps you shall take the part.'
> 'I was rather hoping for Ferdinand.' (...)
> 'Are you sure you have the skill for it?'
> 'What I lack in skill I'll try to make up for in feeling.' (M; 204)

As the ending of the novel makes clear, Conchis' interpretation of the parallel with *The Tempest* assigns the role of Miranda clearly to Alison, while Nick still has to show that he possesses the qualities to assume the role of Ferdinand. But Nicko only seems to realize parallels which are pleasant for himself, such that he has to be made aware that the tasks Conchis sets up for him parallel the tasks that Prospero sets Ferdinand: "'Another magician once sent a young man hewing wood." "I missed that. Prospero and Ferdinand."' (M; 341)

There is another question in this context that seems to be worth asking, even if we cannot provide an answer right here. So far, we have been asking whether or not Nicholas' interpretation of the Prospero parallel is a defensible one. We have seen that his predilection for one possible interpretation is due to his personal preferences, thus exemplifying something like 'The Politics of Interpretation'. But we might ask as well whether both Nick as a character

and we as readers do not put too much emphasis on the Prospero interpretation. During the trial, Nicholas suddenly realizes that another of Shakespeare's dramas, *Othello*, might have a comparable relevance:

> And then, out of that pain, the sheer physical torture, I began to understand. I was Iago; but I was also crucified. The crucified Iago. Crucified by ... the metamorphoses of Lily ran wildly through my brain, like maenads, hunting some blindness, some demon in me down. I suddenly knew her real name, behind the masks. Why they had chosen the Othello situation. (M; 530)

As Acheson (1998; 29) has argued, the Othello parallel is more convincing than the Prospero parallel. If we accept his argument, it is clear that Nicholas is more inclined to see and elaborate the Prospero parallel because he wants to cast himself as Ferdinand. But then why should Fowles waste so much time on elaborating the Prospero parallel and dedicate a comparatively small part of the text to elaborating the Othello parallel (mostly M; 530 f.)? My thesis, which I can only sketch out here, is that if we accept Acheson's argument, we must conclude that Fowles has done so in order to show that we as readers are victims to the same delusions as is Nicholas. In our presumed desire to identify with the hero, we are prone to gulf down the Prospero parallel because we too want him to get Lily/Julie. It is only at the end of the novel that we, as does Nicholas, realize the purpose of Conchis' sometimes cruel manipulations.

Rommerskirchen offers an analysis in a related vein when she argues that while Nicholas is thinking that the roles played by himself as well as Conchis and his crew are prescribed by Conchis himself (Rommerskirchen 1999; 85 ff.), they are, in fact, at least to the same extent a product of Nicholas' imagination, who makes some mistaken assumptions about the nature of his supposed plan.

While this may be true, it is as much true that the frustration of Nicholas' hermeneutic strategies to make sense of what's happening to him are important for the success of Conchis' plan to make Nicholas a shade more aware. It is not that Conchis doesn't have a plan, but Nicholas at first fundamentally misconceives the nature of that plan, and this so with Conchis' encouragement:

after all, it is not without purpose that Nicholas, during his first stay in Conchis' 'domain', finds the poem of Eliot, which comes close to setting the task of exploring his own situation:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time. (Eliot, quoted in M; 69)

A similar strategy can be identified at the hand of the story *The Three Hearts*, to which Conchis occasionally refers. While at times, it seems as if he'd envisage a real-life enactment of that story, it is significant that Julie discourages an interpretation of their situation along its lines, and makes Nicholas aware of the Prospero-parallel (M; 341). What is special about the cases of intertextuality mentioned so far is the fact that they are present not only to the reader of the novel, but to its central characters as well, and it is this fact that allows for the development of the category of the Politics of Interpretation. Had we as readers not known that Nicholas knew these texts, any comment as to his way of using and appropriating them for his personal ends would have remained entirely fortuitous.

We have already seen that the Prospero-parallel assumes plausibility for Nicholas because of the fact that he's inclined to believe the parallel. But Julie's comment comes at a time when both the reader as well as Nicholas are still inclined to believe that Conchis does indeed have a master plan and that Julie has in some way privileged access to his motives. It might be that the interpretation on behalf of the reader is epistemologically on the same footing as that of Nicholas: as he is inclined to believe that Conchis has Prospero-like qualities because he wants to 'have' {Julie/June/Lily/Rose}, we as readers might be inclined to swallow it because we'd like to think the same thing - either because as identificatory readers we want Nicholas to get what he's striving for, or because we have some preconceived notions about the nature of fiction in which characters like Prospero exist. Through the Politics of Interpretation as exhibited by Nicholas, the Politics of Interpretation of (at least some of) the readers are depicted.

3. 4. 1. 2. Other Texts

As we have seen in the preceding section, there are also other cases of direct intertextuality in the present novel, but none of the intertexts occupies a status as prominent as that occupied by the two Shakespeare plays. The status of *Great Expectations* is fundamentally different. While the Shakespearian plays are mentioned quite often - and it is thus only natural that Nicholas is prone to use them as a foil against which he is desperately trying to make sense of his own situation -, *Great Expectations* is mentioned but two times, and by this very fact assumes a much more questionable status.

First of all, *Great Expectations* offers us a glimpse into the creative limits of Nicholas' interpretative strategies. When Dickens's novel is first alluded to by June, he doesn't get her point straight away:

> June gave me a little grin. 'Then welcome, Pip.'
> I looked to Julie for help. She murmured, 'I thought you claimed to have read English at Oxford.'
> (...) Then I woke up, and took a breath. 'All these literary references.'
> I smiled. 'Miss Havisham rides again?'
> 'And Estella.' (M; 347)

While Nicholas at first seems to be supposing that Miss Havisham is being used as a literary equivalent of Conchis, it is actually Mrs de Seitas who comes closest to her. But this comparison is not made in the text of the novel, but in the *Foreword* by Fowles. Other than that, Fowles describes its influence as indirect in the *Foreword*, as well as admits that the above quotation has been included in the revised version only after he had been made aware by a student that there are numerous parallels between the two novels (M; 6). As Fowles has admitted, the reference to Dickens had only been included in the revised version of *The Magus,* and he had '(...) long toyed with the notion of making Conchis a woman - an idea whose faint ghost, Miss Havisham's, remains in the figure of Mrs de Seitas.' (M; 7)

The above quotation is also one of the various elements that point to a potential lack of interpretative creativity on the part of Nicholas. As he confesses himself ('Then I woke up' - M; 347) he is not always very alert to fin-

ding literary analogies. Consequently, we may not only ask whether Nicholas' interpretations are motivated by his personal predilections, but also whether he is a competent interpreter as well. Very probably, Nicholas is able to perceive only those analogies which he is motivated to see, as he admits himself when trying to pin down all the evidence he can find about the symbols used by Conchis: '*Polymus Films.* I didn't see the obvious, that one misplaced letter, until painfully late.' (M; 583)

To sum up then, the intertexts directly mentioned in *The Magus* reveal to the reader the Politics of Interpretation, here exemplified by Nicholas, who seems to be willing to see only those literary references that conform to an interpretation he is already endorsing, the most prominent example being *The Tempest*. Encouraged by the other characters, Nicholas uses it as a foil against which he is analysing the strange experiences he undergoes, but the impetus to develop an interpretation according to which he is meant to assume the role of Ferdinand is, in Eco's words, at least an overinterpretation. This doesn't mean that it's totally implausible on his behalf, since Conchis himself has made him aware of the parallels with *The Tempest*. But to cast himself as Ferdinand, and Julie/Lily as Miranda, tells us more about his own ambitions than about Shakespeare's play.

3. 4. 2. Intertextuality, Case 2

Here, I will analyse those intertexts which are made directly accessible to the reader, but not to any of the characters of the novel. As a result, they won't tell us anything about the Politics of Interpretation of a specific character, but they might tell us something about the readers', i.e. our own, Politics of Interpretation when reading a novel.

The most notable case of this type of intertextuality is the use of extracts of de Sade's *Les Infortunes de la Vertu* as epigram's to the novel's three parts. Undoubtedly, this form of intertextuality is reader-oriented, because the texts mentioned are never present to any of the novel's characters. I will argue in this section that while the first epigram might be seen as rather straightfor-

ward in terms of its relation to the first part of the novel, this is not the case for the other two epigrams.

It is small wonder that most of the critics see the first epigram ('Un débauché de profession est rarement un homme pitoyable' - M; 13) is a characterisation of the attitude that Nicholas had adopted towards women in his student days. As we have already seen, the attitude had been one of objectifying or re-ifying women, i.e. relegating to the status of objects, or more crudely, mere receptacles of male desires (cf. section **2.1.**). As Woodcock has argued, this attitude is a direct parallel to the sexual fascism exhibited by Clegg in *The Collector*, and thus another instance of the Collector Mentality (cf. the analysis given in Woodcock 1984).

The second epigram is much more ambiguous:

> Irrités de ce premier crime, les monstres ne s'en tinrent pas là: ils l'étendirent ensuite nue, à plat ventre sur un grand table, ils allumèrent des cierges, ils placèrent l'image de notre sauveur à sa tête et osèrent consommer sur les reins de cette malheureuse le plus redoutable de nos mystères. (De Sade quoted in M; 65)

The most straightforward interpretation of this second epigram is to see it as applying, once again, to Nicholas. Following this interpretation, Nicholas is simply pursuing his objectifying attitude towards woman further, without any change for the better in his character. This interpretation is in keeping with the 'use' that Nicholas makes not only of Julie/Lily, but of Alison as well. He has not yet overcome his tendency to categorize women by means of the two totally inappropriate categories of the 'madonna' and the 'whore'. As we have already seen, this division is mainly a product of Nicholas' own constructed reality - mainly due to his personal preferences and directly linked to an overt insecurity of interacting with any real woman (following, once again, the excellent analysis of Woodcock 1984).

It might as well be that this not altogether implausible tendency of applying the second epigram to Nicholas alone is one that is similar to Nicholas' use of *The Tempest*, which is, as we have shown, both plausible if we take into account Nicholas isolated situation on Phraxos as well as to be criticised for its egocentricity. But what a lot of critics seem to have overlooked is the

fact that the epigram would be applicable to Conchis as well. After all, Conchis is not necessarily a prototype of the good Samaritan, read initiator, but his methods might be criticised as well: he constantly frustrates Nicholas' wishes as well as expectations and sometimes seems to keep the people on the island by force and power. As a character, Conchis exhibits a hardly dissolvable unity of both complicity and critique: while his purpose is bringing Nicholas to more self-awareness, his methods are at best doubtful. This becomes most apparent at the 'disintoxication phase' at the end of the book. To name only one of the most impressive examples, Nicholas is being made to watch a pornographic film in which Julie/Lily is fucked by Joe. By making both Nicholas and the reader 'watch' this film, the resulting attitude is one of invited voyeurdom, a process we are already familiar with through our analysis of *The Collector*. It is also striking that in virtue of this objectifying attitude to some of the main actors, Conchis' methods seem to be hardly reconcilable with the doctrine of personal freedom he seems to endorse - and the same analysis is surely applicable to Fowles as a novelist:

> That a group of individuals should conspire to baffle another person until he comes to an improved sense of himself, is to put ends before means in a totalitarian fashion which the author seems to condone ... Pervading the book, there is a brutality not wholly acknowledged by the author. (Byrom quoted in Woodcock 1984; 54)

Again, we are faced with at least two possible interpretations for the apparent dilemma. We can see the phenomenon as a narrative failure of Fowles. Or we can see it as being directly linked to our own, egocentric perspective. Being a male critic, let me suggest that my tendency to see Conchis treatment of Nicholas as unfair is motivated by my sympathy for Nicholas as a fellow-male (and probably by my own tendency to find a vicarious pleasure at finding women objectified, provoked by the voyeuristic pose Fowles makes me adopt). In a typically postmodern way, I think that Fowles oscillates between complicity and critique of the male paradigm to make the reader aware of his own predispositions, and this mixture is realised at the level of narrative technique: 'Ironically enough, he seems both to embody and to betray his ethics of freedom in the very narrative strategies he employs.' (Woodcock 1984; 54)

It should be noted in passing that both *The Magus* and *Les Infortunes* can be read as stories of initiation, as well as journeys into domains without a name. With de Sade, the purpose of the initiation is to make either the reader or the main character see that a life of virtue doesn't pay. Nicholas undergoing an initiation, too, but it can hardly be doubted that the purpose is fundamentally different. In de Sade's oeuvre, *Les Infortunes* was not meant to be a novel unconnected to his other writings. As de Sade's own 'revised version', *Justine ou les Infortunes de la Virtue* proves, Justine and her sister Juliette are conceived along the lines of the madonna/whore distinction already mentioned. While de Sade describes that a life of virtue doesn't pay in both *Justine* and the temporarily prior *Les Infortunes...*, in his novel on Justine's sister Juliette he gives us an account of how a life of vice can be both materially and emotionally fulfilling. Given that the moral impetus of Fowles' novel is of a totally different nature, we might conclude that Fowles' is criticising de Sade as one of the early literary exponents of the Collector Mentality; but given the arguments advanced in the preceding paragraph, we have to assume that Fowles is not immune to the illness he is describing.

The third epigram takes up once again the quest motif elaborated in the second part at the example of Nicholas trying to get hold both of the madonna as well as trying to deduce explanations for her behaviour. As we have seen, Nicholas' quest is criticised as far as it constitutes an instantiation of the Collector Mentality analysed above. The strange appeal to 'providence' in the epigram links it with *The Magus* appeal to mystery as one of the driving forces of our very existence. One of the main lessons that Conchis is trying to teach Nicholas is, after all, that not all of life's mystery can be explained, nor should be. At least this is the meaning that Conchis himself attributes to his own story of the Norwegian scientist Nygard:

> 'There had always been a conflict in me between mystery and meaning. I had pursued the later, worshipped the latter as a doctor. As a socialist and rationalist. But then I saw that the attempt to scientize reality, to name it and categorize it and vivisect it out of existence, was like trying to remove the air from the atmosphere. In the creating of the vacuum it was the experimenter who died, because he was inside the vacuum.' (M; 410)

In conjunction with the arguments already developed in 3. 2., Nicholas has been presented with a fully fledged criticism of a solely scientific and rationalist approach to the mysteries of human existence, but as the third Sadeian epigraph shows, he has not yet learned his lesson. Consequently, the theme of the quest is elaborated in the caricature of a detective story the reader is presented with in the third part. De Sade's epigram expresses nicely the rationalist attitude that is one of the fundaments of detective work:

> Le triomphe de la philosophie serait de jeter du jour sur l'obscurité dont la providence se sert pour parvenir aux fins qu'elle se propose pour l'homme, et de tracer d'après cela quelque plan de conduite qui pût faire connaître à ce malheureux animal bipède, perpétuellement ballotté par les caprices de cet être que dit-on le dirige aussi despotiquement, la manière dont il faut qu'il interprète les décrets de cette providence pour lui. (M; 567)

In spite of the critique of the scientific and rationalist approaches offered by Conchis, Nicholas takes up the attitude of a detective and tries to gather every information that is available on both the persons he has met on Phraxos as well as the symbols they used (most notably in chapters 70 and 71). This might seem strange, given the fact that he had already learnt (cf. section 2.1.) that Conchis is able to forge evidence. But it is in keeping with the novel's general stance of complicity and critique, for Nicholas learns about both the merits as well as the limitations of the attitude he has adopted. His detective work is both successful and frustrating, since he is able to gather some important information that eventually helps him to find Alison again (M; 583), but he also becomes aware of the limitations of the detective work in the form of an awareness that 'the obscurity of providence', to use de Sade's words, is never to be unveiled:

> That was the meaning of the fable. By searching so fanatically I was making a detective story out of the summer's events, and to view life as a detective story, as something that could be deduced, hunted, and arrested, was no more realistic (let alone poetic) than to view the detective story as the most important literary genre, instead of what it really was, one of the least. (M; 552)

If we accept this as the general message of Conchis' fable, it is most strange indeed that he can be likened very much to what in the de Sade-quote is re-

ferred to as providence. Like de Sadeian Providence, the purposes of his game at first remain obscure. Just at the time when both the reader as well as Nicholas think that Conchis' message consists in the adoption of an attitude that doesn't try to explain the causes of the mystery, Nicholas is shown to have at least a partial success. Once again, we find an attitude of complicity and critique: while the rationalist cause is defended by him finding Alison, it is still questionable if he has attained the heightened personal authenticity that is the other part of Conchis' teaching.

3. 4. 3. Conclusion

Comparing the various forms of intertextuality used in *The Magus*, the following conclusion can be drawn: there are some intertexts which are present to Nicholas, and of which he makes heavy use to try and explain his own predicament, as well as to develop guidelines for his future behaviour. The most prominent example, as we have seen, is *The Tempest*. The common feature of all these texts is that none of them answers Nicholas' questions fully. By adopting the point of view of his protagonist, Fowles allows the reader to identify with Nicholas and thus to follow through the various interpretations that he advances, but which are ultimately rejected. In contrast to this procedure, there are a lot of intertexts which have influenced *The Magus*, but which are only present to the reader in virtue of Fowles' 'Foreword'. Fowles thus consciously invites the reader to consider other literary parallels than the ones advanced or proposed by Nicholas, suggesting that there are better interpretative strategies available than the once actually used by him. But he also exposes interpretations for what they really are: constructs which might be motivated more by the interpreters preferences and convictions than by their inner plausibility. It is not only Nicholas' psychological make-up in relation to some intertexts, but also the relation of the different kinds of intertextuality that serves to highlight what I have called the Politics of Interpretation.

What is remarkable is the fact that Fowles plays a similar game with the reader as Conchis is playing with Nicholas: he constantly offers him explanations which might prove wrong afterwards. An obvious example is the

mentioning of Tarot symbols:

> 'All that Lily and Rose nonsense.'
> 'The names are a kind of joke. There's a card in the Tarot pack called the magus. The magician ... conjuror. Two of his traditional symbols are the lily and the rose.' (M; 477)

> The old man turned. 'Now - on my left - you see an empty box. But we like to think that there is a goddess inside. A virgin goddess whom none of us has ever seen, nor will ever see. We call her Ashtaroth the Unseen. Your training in literature will permit you, I am sure, to guess at her meaning. And through her at our, we humble scientists', meaning.' (M; 505)

The mentioning of the Tarot symbols is a good case in point, because Fowles employs quite a number of strategies to strengthen the association, only to frustrate the expectations to which he has given rise. Since the book is divided into 78 chapters, and the a Taro card deck consists of 78 cards, readers might feel tempted to find correspondence between chapters and individual cards, but as Loveday has mentioned, '(...)Barry Olshen notes that the seventy-eight chapters of the novel correspond to the seventy-eight cards in the Tarot deck, but finds "little correlation between the individual cards and chapters."' (Acheson 1998; 95n.)

The important point to remember is the fact that Fowles both encourages an identificatory reading of his novel (most notably by the priviledged access the reader has to Nicholas', but not the other characters' minds, as well as by intertextual strategies as the one mentioned above) and frustrates them at the same time, implying that the interpretations of the readers are no better or worse than the ones advanced by Nicholas, thus allowing for as well as discouraging an identificatory reading. A similar point will be made in the following subsection, in which the metanarratives of Conchis - as they can be deduced from the stories he tells Nicholas - will be analysed.

3. 4. 4. Prospero's Tales

> Gott hat sich erschossen, ein Dachgeschoss wird ausgebaut.
> (Einstürzende Neubauten, from the LP 'Haus der Lüge')

The stories that Conchis tells Nicholas will be treated rather shortly in this section, to avoid a repetition of some of the points already analysed in the

above subsection. Without arguing further for it, I will classify the three tales that Conchis presents Nicholas with (the 'de Deukans story', the 'Nygaard story' and the 'Wimmel story') as exemplifications of the meta-narratives endorsed by him.

In a nut-shell, Conchis' meta-narrative is that of the Godgame, linked with the theme of existentialist authenticity. The argument is similar to Nietzsche's famous statement of the death of God, but it has a decisive different twist to it. In contrast to the Nietzschean argument, God is not dead, but has merely absconded in Conchis' version. One of the results is the same: metaphysical explanations and arguments can be identified as mere constructs to which no reality can be attributed. In a world devoid of metaphysical as well as moral imperatives, the individual is, literally, free to behave as she wants. This freedom has a sometimes distressing quality for the individual, because she has to develop a conception of her own life without premises. The theme of the Godgame is prominent in all of Fowles' fiction, and has been analysed by almost every critic who has written on him, so I need not explain its nature further.

In the absence of guidelines such as reality or metaphysics, man is free to cast herself in whatever role she wants to. It is at this point that the Godgame is linked with constructivism, as will be explained by one of its most convincing theorists, Mrs de Seitas:

> 'But why the colossal performance just to tell one miserable, moral bankrupt what he is?' (...)
> 'Nicholas, if one is trying to reproduce, however partially, something of the mysterious purposes that govern existence, then one also has to go beyond some of the conventions man has invented to keep those purposes at bay. That doesn't mean that in our ordinary lives we think such conventions should be swept away. Far from it. They are necessary *fictions*. But in the godgame we start from the premise that in reality all is fiction, yet no single fiction is necessary.'
> (M; 627, my emphasis)

In terms of her theory, moral imperatives (such as the demand to behave authentically or the commandment not to inflict unnecessary pain) are necessary fictions. Since man is free to cast himself as he wants, the decision to cast himself in a certain manner becomes a matter of politics. In analogy to the Politics

of both Representation and Interpretation, we can add here a Politics of Construction, which claims that not all the roles we invent for ourselves have the same value. While some obscure followers (and predecessors) of Nietzsche have argued that in the absence of God, everything is permitted, Mrs de Seitas and Conchis' interpretation, and probably Fowles' own as well, are fundamentally different in the emphasis they put on personal responsibility and their definition of 'freedom':

> He had simply guessed that for me freedom meant the freedom to satisfy personal desire, private ambition. Against that he set a freedom that must be responsible for its actions; something much older than the existentialist freedom, I suspected - a moral imperative, an almost Christian concept, certainly not a political or democratic one. (M; 440 f.)

In spite of the absence of moral or metaphysical guidelines, there are, Fowles seems to imply, better or worse strategies of realizing one's existential authenticity. As Rommerskirchen has argued, it would be impossible to criticise Nicholas if there were no qualitative differences (cf. Rommerskirchen 1999; 109). As Acheson has argued, it is also is not an option for Nicholas simply to take over Conchis' world view. Only if he develops his own system of values will he be existentially authentic: '(...) for to view the world as Conchis does would mean living by another man's view of it, instead of formulating his own. The existentially authentic individual must construct the world for himself in his own way.' (Acheson 1998; 25)

Now on the one hand, it is most strange indeed that while the magi propose the value of existential authenticity as a quasi-moral precept, Fowles seems to be endorsing a view that every reader can make whatever meaning she wants to see in the novel (M; 9). After all, there is reason to believe that an interpretation of seeing Nicholas on his way to a greater existential authenticity is not the only possible one, but one of the most plausible.

On the other hand, it is also a strategy that is in keeping with the novel's purpose, since to merely indoctrinate the reader (or Nicholas) with a certain version of existential authenticity would be to condemn her/him to being existentially inauthentic.

The ambivalence alluded to here is also evidenced by the fact that not all critics really see Nicholas on his way to a greater existential authenticity:

> We begin to wonder just how heroic the 'hero' is; whether or not he really has changed; if the ending is in fact the happy one that the book seems to be leading up to. Above all we begin to see that the prominence which the book allots to its philosophical element may in fact serve, not to assert, but to question and undermine these so-called 'truths'. (Loveday 1985; 29)

To sum up then, *The Magus* allows for an identificatory reading, one of the purposes of which is to explain what greater existential authenticity is all about. But the limits of the identificatory reading process are also inscribed in the novel. Those readers who do not happen to be convinced by the existential frame work of the novel might see a lot of equally plausible interpretations. I would also like to add in passing that the dilemma I have just outlined, and which can be summarized in the question *'Can we make whatever use we want of a text or are there privileged uses or interpretations?'* is one that has in all ages puzzled writers as well as critics. In our times, the debate has been reanimated by the fundamentally different positions of critics such as Eco and Rorty. While this first seems to endorse the view that not all interpretations are equally could, and that consequently, some of them are more in keeping with what he defines as *intentio operis*, the second has argued (to put it roughly) that any given text justifies whatever use any particular reader happens to make of it (cf. a summary of the debate in Eco 1992a and b). Both in *The Magus* as a novel, as well as in its 'Foreword' we find both positions exemplified on a narrative as well as theoretical level. As I have argued, although Fowles seems to endorse the view that there is no right reaction to his text (M; 9), the very narrative strategies he employs suggest something different. After all, how else could Nicholas be reproached for making use of *The Tempest* in a way that reflects more of his own attitudes than of the intention of either Shakespeare or Conchis?

4. The French Lieutenant's Woman

4. 1. Introduction

With the possible exception of *The Collector*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* without a doubt is Fowles' commercially most successful book. It is also one of the few of Fowles' novels which have been adapted as a film (screenplay by H. Pinter).

As far as the plot is concerned, the novel introduces a fairly straightforward story with the protagonist, Charles Smithson, having to decide between two women: the rather shallow, conventional Ernestina Freeman (with whom he is already engaged) and the social outcast Sarah Woodruff. Existential authenticity is once again one of the key issues in the novel, and in choosing Sarah over Ernestina (and hereby defying the rigid conventions of the Victorian society), Charles is depicted as being on his way towards existential authenticity.

This, however, is not the only central theme of the book, since *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is clearly a case of what L. Hutcheon has labelled *historiographic metafiction*. As we have already discussed above, *historiographic metafiction* shares with other examples of postmodernist literature a critical attitude towards representational strategies. As metafiction, it is conscious of its own fictional status; on the level of historicity, it is conscious of the fact that much of what is passed on as an history represents not so much the state of affairs of a bygone era, but reflects also the preferences and prejudices of those who wrote these accounts. As we have already said above, a lot of postmodernist literature, and especially historiographic metafiction, is conscious that what we are reading does not have to be a neutral and objectivist of things as they really happened - but then it is already conscious that such texts sometimes are our only possibility to learn something about the past at all. Whereas some deconstructionist theories use the critique of representation to deduce the total textuality of all historical events, arguing that we are always dealing with fiction when we read texts, literary postmodernism as defined by Hutcheon acknowledges that sometimes our only access to the past is through

texts whose epistemological status may be problematic. She argues that '(...) past events existed empirically, but in epistemological terms we can only know them today through texts. Past events are given *meaning,* not *existence*, by their representation in history.' (Hutcheon 1989; 81 f.) Nevertheless, the attitude of both complicity and critique that she adopts (cf. Hutcheon 1989; 11) seems to be more fruitful if we want to say anything about representation at all (and this even if we adopt the most sceptical of all attitudes). As a paradigm case of historiographic metafiction, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is obsessed with all of these questions.

4. 2. The Problem of Representation in Historiographic Metafiction

4. 2. 1. Historiographic Metafiction and Intertextuality

In view of the above considerations, it should be clear that the representational strategies employed in the novel are far from being simple or straightforward. As in other novels of Fowles, some emphasis is placed on showing how what a character thinks is reality is actually a construct that can reflect his own prejudices rather than the real state of things. Being a case of historiographic metafiction, though, the scope of the representational critique is widened to include questions such as 'How is it possible to convey a realistic impression of 19th century England to a 20th/21st century reader?'

As far as the narrative strategies and procedures are concerned, one method that Fowles employs frequently is that of *anachronistic writing*: to make a point about Victorian society, he sometimes compares it with phenomena that a 20th century reader can be assumed to be more familiar with. A case in point is the omniscient author's own comment on the existentialist dimension of Charles's choice of Sarah over Ernestina. Clearly, in the 1870s Charles could not have read Sartre or other existentialist authors, but nevertheless his predicament is described in such terms:

> But above all it seemed to set Charles a choice; and while one part of him hated having to choose, we come near the secret of his state on that journey west when we know that another part of him felt intolerably excited by the proximity of the moment of choice. He had not the benefit of existentialist terminology; but what he felt was really a very

> clear case of the anxiety of freedom - that is, the realization that one *is* free and the realization that being free is a situation of terror. (*FLW*; 267)

Not having the benefit of having read, say, Camus, Charles nevertheless understands and makes use of existentialist concepts. This not only shows that such an attitude does not necessarily presuppose a correspondent theory, but as in the other novels of Fowles, much stress is laid on the fact that existential authenticity involves more than simply acting according to one's own preferences - a lesson that Charles has to learn as Nicholas had to learn it in *The Magus*. Once again, we are shown that the adoption of 'existentialist' principles might be due to the fact that people *want* to be existentially authentic, want to adhere to the community of what Fowles in *The Aristos* has labelled the 'elect'. Thus, the picture that Charles conveys to us might simply be another representation of his wishes rather than reality - ironically it is Dr Grogan (one of the most ambiguous characters of the novel), who has to make him aware of it:

> 'You believe yourself to belong to a rational and scientific elect. No, no, I know what you would say, you are not so vain. (...) It is this. That the elect, whatever the particular grounds they advance for their cause, have introduced a finer and fairer morality into this dark world. If they fail that test, then they become no more than despots, sultans, mere seekers after their own pleasure and power. (....) If you become a better and a more generous human being, you may be forgiven. But if you become more selfish ... you are doubly damned.' (*FLW*: 311)

The above examples may suffice to show that representation is critically examined not only on the historical, but on the general level as well. But it is on the historiographic level that the critique of representation is at its most effective in *FLW*. One of the central questions in this respect is how to represent Victorian society to a 20th century reader - the implicit assumption being that if such a reader simply read Victorian texts, he might get the picture wrong because he'd be reading them with a 20th century mind. Let me add here that this also means that the critique of representation is not only possible because those who represent have certain aims, convictions, prejudices -- we can also argue for a critique of representation because of the metanarratives that we can attribute to the recipient. As already said above, Fowles makes use of anachronistic comments in order to get a realistic impression across to the contemporary reader. But the aim of these comments is not simply to teach the reader about

Victorian England; they also exemplify an attitude of both complicity and critique that Hutcheon has identified as a constituent feature of postmodernist literature. An example might illustrate this point.

In one of the very first scenes of the novel, as Ernestina and Charles enjoy a walk at the Cobb (the landscape against which most of the novel is set), Fowles has her say: '"These are the very steps that Jane Austen made Louisa Musgrove fall down in *Persuasion.*"' (*FLW*; 13) For a reader not familiar with the literary work of Austen, the allusion nevertheless has the effect of heightening the novel's realist pretensions, for it is quite probable that, if the characters in the novel were real, they could be on the very same steps that inspired Austen to let Louisa fall down. But since both *Persuasion* as well as *FLW* are works of fiction, we will never be able to decide this question unanimously. After all, even if Ernestina were a real person, Louisa and the steps that she is reported to fall down simply *are* a product of the imagination of Jane Austen. The complexity is augmented further by the fact that - while both the steps and Ernestina are clearly fictional for the contemporary reader, the Cobb is a landscape that can still be visited today (in contrast to the steps, I would assume). The reader is thus faced with a puzzle of clearly fictional, intertextual and real elements that at the same time both augment and subvert the impression of realism:

> The Cobb is there as I write, being eroded in the darkness on the other side of the world. But Louisa Musgrove never fell down its steps, not in the sense that I could. It is, on the other hand, true that Jane Austen said she did, yet it is not true, in the same sense, that Ernestina Freeman ever reported the writer as having done so. (Johnson 1981; 292)

The text bristles with further instances of a similar procedure, such as when Marx is introduced thus: '(...) Charles knew nothing of the beavered German Jew quietly working, as it so happened, that very afternoon in the British Museum library; and whose work in those sombre walls was to bear such bright red fruit.' (*FLW*; 16) Here again, the reader is unable to decide whether or not it is true that Marx really was in the British Library *that very afternoon*, but nevertheless, the comment bestows credibility on the text for it convincingly places it into a realistic - if not real - intellectual context. Similar narrative tech-

niques might be observed when contemporaries of Charles such as J. S. Mill, Darwin or Lyell are discussed. For present purposes, the examples discussed above should suffice.

But Fowles sometimes takes a critical stance even towards interpretations and analyses of his texts which seem to be very plausible and promising. To name but one example, there are references in *FLW* to the works of J.S. Mill (e.g. *FLW*; 95), which help the reader place the events about which he is reading into an appropriate setting. After all, Sarah Woodruff is one of the few women of her time who is willing, able - as well as determined enough - to take her life into her own hands. Mill's engagement in promoting women's equal rights is universally known, and so the reference at first seems plausible enough. It seems all the more plausible when reading the analysis of Acheson:

> Fowles chose the date carefully. In 1867 John Stuart Mill tried (but failed) to persuade his Parliamentary colleagues to grant women the vote; Mills efforts are mentioned in the novel, and serve as an appropriate backdrop to its treatment of the lot of the intelligent women in the mid-nineteenth century. In the same year, Marx published the first volume of *Das Kapital*, a book concerned with social class, an issue that figures promptly in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. (Acheson 1998; 33)

The reader may be surprised, them, when she reads in an interview that Tarbox did with Fowles:

> Who was the first man to write a book on me? William Palmer. He sent me the proof to criticize before it was published, and there was a whole lot about the influence of J. S. Mill in it. I wrote back and said, sorry, but I hadn't to my knowledge ever read a word of J. S. Mill. (...) I have a very peculiar reading knowledge, I'm afraid. The classics I haven't read - the list is disgraceful. (Fowles in Tarbox 1988; 181)

Even though Acheson's text is later, I nevertheless think that his interpretation is right despite Fowles' claim to the contrary. For Mill to be part of an 'appropriate backdrop' to the novel, there is no need of Fowles having read any of his works; it suffices perfectly that he should have known about it. The case might be different with Palmer's analysis, because the function of the (possible) intertext is a totally different one: while Acheson argues that the reference helps placing the book into an appropriate context, Palmer had argued that Fowles had actually been influenced by Mill. I think that an interpretation such as Acheson's (even

if more moderate than the claim advanced by Palmer) is perfectly feasible here because of the simple fact that the text of *FLW* allows for such an interpretation. In Eco's concept (cf. Eco 1992a) of the *opera aperta*, we could list the interpretation of Acheson as one that is validated by the *intentio operis*. Palmer's fault would then be to have said something about the *intentio auctoris* - and for such a claim, we need more evidence that can be gathered by the fictional text(s) of an author.

What are the functions, then of such uses of intertextual elements in the fiction of Fowles? As said above, one of the main functions certainly is to place the action of the novel in a historically appropriate context. But then on a clearly factual level, Charles Smithson has *never been* a contemporary of Mill or Marx. So what is clearly a violation of truth criteria on the factual level might enhance the verisimilitude of a literary work, especially a work of *historiographic metafiction*. I think that it is but a small step from these considerations to Baudrillard's concept of the *simulacrum* - the substitute that is realer than real. At least as far as Fowles is concerned, such *simulacring* strategies seem to have their place in historiographic metafiction - indeed they might be one of its very constituents, their function being to close the temporal gap that divides the contemporary reader from the epoch about which she is reading. Fowles consciously admits using such strategies, and their function is once again to close the time gap:

> But I soon get into trouble over dialogue, because the genuine dialogue of 1867 (insofar as it can be heard in books of the time) is far too close to our own to sound convincingly old. It very often fails to agree with our psychological view of the Victorians - it is not stiff enough, and so on; and here at once I have to start cheating and pick out the more formal and archaic (even for 1867) elements of spoken speech.
> (Fowles 1969; 139)

We should note here in passing that a lot of the strategies that Fowles employs in order to close that gap are intertextual strategies. Once again we find in a novel by Fowles uses of intertextuality which transcend the functions traditionally ascribed to it. Its function is very similar to the function of the other *diachronic* procedures of writing, and the purpose that they have is not so much to take a critical or ironical stance towards the text that they use, but rather to create for a contemporary reader a 'realer than real' Victorian atmosphere. It is also because

of this very function of intertextuality (which is neither *parody* nor *pastiche*) that its actual realisation is in a form that is *reader-oriented* rather than *character-oriented*.

In addition to this function, *FLW* shares with other intertextual novels some of the other functions of intertextuality, such as when they challenge any clear-cut distinction of fictional and factual texts. Texts such as *FLW* make the reader realize two things at a time: that she is reading a fictional text, while this very text at the same time - honestly - tries to convey a realistic impression of 19th century England.

As far as Hutcheon's analysis of Postmodernism is concerned, we can summarize the above points by saying that the intertextual elements in *FLW* constitute a case of both complicity and critique: complicity, in the sense that they help to get a coherent or realistic impression across to the reader - critique, because they highlight as well the fictional nature of the other parts of the text. As such, the use of intertextuality exemplifies the epistemological problem that is characteristic of all *historiographic metafiction* - and which is itself an instance of both complicity and critique: '(...) past events existed empirically, but in epistemological terms we can only know them today through texts.' (Hutcheon 1989; 81).

4. 2. 2. Historiographic Metafiction and the Critique of Representation

As a result from the preceding section, we can state with Hutcheon that '[h]istorical meaning may thus be seen today as unstable, contextual, relational, and provisional, but postmodernism argues that, in fact, it has always been so.' (Hutcheon 1989; 67) One of the ways by which this dilemma is realized in the novels of Fowles is that of *diachronic narrative strategies*. The function of these strategies is not a new one in the present context, since it incites the reader to leave her own 20th (21st) century perspective in order to adopt an attitude that enables her to develop a realistic picture of a past century. We have already identified Fowles' 'cheating' over dialogue as one instance. One way to achieve this aim is the frequent habit of Fowles to address his reader directly or indirectly, such as when he compares the ways in which both Victorians and contemporaries

might perceive the same phenomenon: 'The colors of the young ladies´ clothes would strike us today as distinctly strident; but the world was then in the first fine throes of the discovery of aniline dyes.' (*FLW*; 10 f.)

For a contemporary reader to understand the impressions that a Victorian might have, Fowles sees the necessity to translate Victorian concepts into contemporary ones. Once again, we can identify a position of both complicity and critique, because while it is true that these procedures serve to get a more realistic picture across to the contemporary reader, the intrusive manner of Fowles as an author also points out the very fact that somebody other than a Victorian is representing the facts for us. And this in turn means that we can ask questions about the motives, prejudices or meta-narratives of the intrusive author - questions which will help us to work out the specific elements of complicity and critique in *The Ebony Tower*.

> What is foregrounded in postmodern theory and practice is the self-conscious inscription within history of the existing, but usually concealed, attitude of the historians toward their material. Provisionality and undecidability, partisanship and even overt politics - these are what replace the pose of objectivity and disinterestedness that denies the interpretative and implicitly evaluative nature of historical representation. (Hutcheon 1989; 74)

Obviously, Fowles is aware of the danger that there might be some readers who might take the author's word at face value. As a sort of caveat, he sometimes uses the technique of diachronic narration in very overt ways, blurring the distinctions of the distinctions of both fictional time and the 'real' time, which is the time of the writing of *FLW*:

> Those two purchases had cost Sarah ninepence in an old china shop; the Toby was cracked, and was to be recracked in the course time, as I can testify, having bought it myself a year o two ago for a good deal more than the three pennies Sarah was charged. (*FLW*; 220)

The problematizing of representation that we can find here is later linked with the plot of the novel, as when Fowles tries to explain Sarah's demand that Charles behave authentically in very modern words: 'Though direct, it was a timid look. Yet behind it lay a very modern phrase: *Come clean*, Charles, *come clean*. It took the recipient *off balance*.' (*FLW*; 119 - my emphases) Obviously,

Fowles seems to think that the need for translating the concepts of one epoch into those of another is not limited to a specific form of art or depending on which are the epochs that are being discussed. He sees it as a general need when talking about different representations at all:

> [T]hose visions of the contented country labourer and his brood made so fashionable by George Morland and his kind (...) were as stupid and pernicious a sentimentalization, therefore a suppression of reality, as that in our own Hollywood films of 'real' life. (*FLW*; 129)

Without wanting to venture out too far, we will encounter similar examples of the same narrative strategy in *A Maggot*, as well as find the same epistemological problem also in those novels of Fowles which are not *historiographic metafiction* - if to a lesser degree.

As we have seen above in Fowles' comment on the Victorian dialogue and the troubles he had in achieving it, it is sometimes the case that in order to create a certain impression, you have to exaggerate its fundamental characteristics beyond a degree that could be described as realistic. This does not only mean - as Baudrillard argued - that postmodernism is the age in which our ways of representing are taken for criteria of realism rather than the things themselves (cf. Best 1991; 119 f.). It also indicates that in postmodernism, realism as a representative as well as literary strategy has lost its innocence. Pushed to the extreme, realism defeats itself, thus both reinforcing as well as deconstructing elements of verisimilitude, because if the author has to intrude his own fiction in order to create a realistic atmosphere, the fictionality of his enterprise is evidenced at the same time. As Johnson has argued, 'Fowles reveals that if the devices of realism are pushed to their fullest extent they conclude only by emphasizing the fictional, 'unreal' quality of what they describe.' (Johnson 1981; 290)

In a related vein are the comments on the rigidity that 20th century readers think characteristic of the Victorian age. It is striking that the engagement of Sam and Mary (who belong to the lower social layers, whereas Charles and Ernestina are quasi-aristocratic) is described in a way that incites the reader to conclude that sexual and emotional restraint are not a characteristic

of the Victorian age as such, but one that can mainly be attributed to the members of the upper classes in that age. Since our cliché of Victorianism usually involves the element of sexual rigidity, we as readers are shown that what we thought of as realistic might actually be rather far off the mark. It also makes us aware of the fact that we as readers have certain preconceptions and convictions before we read a text, and that these influence strongly what we are prepared to consider as realistic. *FLW*, at least for my personal case, helps to correct these preconceptions, while at the same time indicating how they shape our criteria of realism.

To close this section, I'd like to add that I will not treat the critique of representation as far as it applies to the central characters of the novel at length. Quite often, Charles is not very honest when representing his own character to the other people in the novel. As we have already seen in a quotation above (cf. p. 68) , he believes himself to be part of a rational and scientific élite, while it is at best doubtful if he really possesses the qualities that would entitle him to such membership. It is only at the hand of the novel that he has reached a degree of personal authenticity that enables him to see through not only the pretensions of other people, but his own as well. It is obvious as well that the reasons that Charles has to picture himself thus, are mainly egoistic. His situation parallels that of Nicholas in *The Magus*, who is also given to casting himself in roles that reflect his wishes more than his nature. We are therefore once again confronted with the Politics of Representation, as well as the Politics of Interpretation (after all, Charles's attempts to cast himself as a scientist depend on both, how he represents himself, and how he interprets his own behaviour). I think these two concepts have been analysed at length in the discussion of *The Magus*, to name but one example here.

4. 3. The Intrusive Author and the Critique of Metanarratives

4. 3. 1. The Intrusive Author and the Metafictional Elements in *FLW*

As we have seen in the preceding section, Fowles is a highly intrusive author who likes to comment not only on his characters, but also on themes that might be considered as lying outside the scope of the novel. Being a case of *historiographic metafiction*, it is small wonder that these include a lot of comments about the nature of writing, its aims and procedures. As we have seen in the case of *diachronic narration*, they include comments about both the narrated time and the time of the writing of the novel. Because he sometimes addresses not only the reader, but his characters as well, Fowles defies the clear-cut distinction that had traditionally been assumed between an author and characters. On the other hand, it is clear that most of *FLW* is written by an omniscient narrator, and at times we may wonder whether or not we are invited to indentify him (her?) with Fowles.

Whereas during the 19th century, literature had been conceived of as either 'fictional' or 'descriptive' (a claim that Logical Positivism conserved up until the 20th century in other disciplines), not only postmodernist, but deconstructionist and poststructuralist literature as well, have abolished such a clear-cut distinction. As the following quote makes clear, Fowles does not believe in the original binary opposition himself, but the interesting point here is that he seems to do so because of the critique of representation that he deems applicable to any character at all:

> A character is either 'real' or 'imaginary'? If you think that, *hypocrite lecteur*, I can only smile. You do not even think of your own past as quite real; you dress it up, you gild it or blacken it, and put it away on a shelf -- your book, your romanced autobiography. We are all in flight from the real reality. That is a basic definition of *Homo sapiens*. (*FLW*; 82)

As are a lot of postmodern positions, this one is ambivalent because it contains its opposite within: if there were no distinction between 'fictional' and 'realist' types of texts, a mixture of both concepts, as Fowles seems to allude to by the expression 'quite real', would be impossible. The conclusion must

be that the two concepts are opposed ideally, but not practically.

In a further step, Fowles links this position with the actions of the protagonist Charles, for he too likes to fictionalize the events of his past and future life. By thus linking a question of literary theory with the plot, another problem is highlighted: that of the freedom of a novel's characters. That Fowles is highly interested in the freedom of 'his' characters is evidenced by the fact that the narrator, though usually omniscient, sometimes leaves the point of view formerly adopted in order to shatter and deconstruct it. The reader of *TFLW* is always presented with the thoughts of, say, Charles and most of the other characters; in contrast, Sarah's thoughts are almost never revealed, and can only be deduced from her behaviour. Epistemologically speaking, the reader is thus in a position similar to that of Charles, because one of the procedures by which Fowles manages to create suspense is the fact that Charles has to guess Sarah's motives and feelings. As the existentialist interpretations of the novel make clear, Charles is more often than not wrong when thinking about the contents of Sarah's mind, and this so because of his own lack of authenticity. By adopting the point of view of *selective omniscience*, we as (male) readers at once identify with Charles, but if his inauthenticity is criticised, so is our own. Thus the concept of a fully or partially omniscient narrator is deconstructed from within. It is also deconstructed on a formal level, such as when Fowles explicitly leaves the assumed point of view, writing about Sam and Mary: 'Whether they met that next morning, in spite of Charles's express prohibition, *I do not know*.' (*FLW*; 110, my emphasis)

Fowles also comments on why Sarah is not being portrayed by an omniscient narrator and identifies her as the novel's 'protagonist', thereby positively frustrating the reading experience of the reader, who is prone to see Charles as the protagonist because of the privileged access to his mind as opposed to those of other characters. It seems as if the more the characters possess existential authenticity, the less is the adoption of the point of view of an omniscient narrator adequate:

> (...) I preached earlier on of the freedom characters must be given.
> My problem is simple -- what Charles wants is clear? It is indeed.

> But what the protagonist wants is not so clear; and I am not at all sure where she is at the moment. (*FLW*; 317)

I argue that the adoption of such a playful attitude towards the problem of point of view is a typically postmodernist feature in the fiction of Fowles. In modernism, the refusal to adopt a fully omniscient perspective is evidenced by such prototypical works as Joyce's *Ulysses,* Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, or Woolf's *The Waves* -- all of them novels whose focus on the particularity of the different perspectives of their respective characters is characteristic of modernism's revolt against the realist tradition. In the fiction of Fowles, we are presented with a hybrid point of view, which takes up the critique that modernism advanced against traditional points of view, but also resurrects some realist elements such the existence of a plot or the desire to teach the reader. According to Fowles, this procedure is necessary to create the impression that his characters are really free: '[*W*]*e wish to create worlds as real as, but other than the world as it is.* (...) We also know that a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator; a planned world (...) is a dead world.' (*FLW*; 81) The interesting point here is, of course, that Fowles as an author tells us that he is forced by circumstances to adopt the point of view he adopts - circumstances that might be intrinsic to the enterprise of writing fictional texts at all (as in the quote above), or extrinsic: '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*; 80)

Despite all this consideration for the freedom of the novel's characters, Fowles is, as we have already pointed out, a highly intrusive author, who reveals more often than not that he is ultimately the creator - and by implication the god - of his characters. This happens in a most exemplary manner when he introduces the third ending of the novel by simply turning back the clock

> He makes a small adjustment to the time. It seems - though unusual in an instrument from the bench of the greatest of watchmakers - that he was running a quarter of an hour fast. It is doubly strange, for there is no visible clock by which he could have discovered the error in his own timepiece. But the reason may be guessed. He is meanly providing himself with an excuse for being late at his next appointment. (*FLW*; 362)

Since a lot has already been written about the different endings of the novel (cf.

e.g. Acheson 1998), I will confine myself to pointing out that by the very fact of including two endings that might be considered plausible as far as the continuity of the novel as a whole is concerned, Fowles leaves the reader in position of freedom similar to that of Charles. On the other hand, the final ending is a shade more convincing, first, because it comes last and therefore will be remembered more vividly, second, because it is more in keeping with the general existentialist frame of the novel. Once again, the reader is in a position that is epistemologically similar to that of Charles, and this reflects once again Fowles' desire to teach, his *didactic* way of writing. The third ending makes this point more obvious, since it is ultimately Fowles as an author who is responsible for casting himself as an intrusive narrator - the very device that enables him to separate Sarah and Charles. That such a conclusion is not an arbitrary identification is also evidenced by the interpretation that Acheson gives to the echoing of the Arnold quote which constitute the very last lines of the novel:

> What seems more probable is that Fowles echoes the line from Arnold for the sake of suggesting that however hard he has tried to make his characters seem free, as their author he is ultimately the God who separates them (Acheson 1998; 47)

Fowles' own intrusion into the text also reflect the very fact that because of the divers procedures and points of view he adopts, as well as the different themes that are being explored, it is not easy to say what sort of text we are actually presented with. As he makes clear himself, *FLW* could be read as a collection of autobiographical and critical essays treating different themes in a fictionalized form:

> Instead of chapter headings, perhaps I should have written 'On the Horizontality of Existence,' 'The Illusions of Progress,' 'The History of the Novel Form,' 'The Aetiology of Freedom,' 'Some Forgotten Aspects of the Victorian Age' ... what you will. (*FLW*; 80 f.)

Such a categorization is far from being implausible, indeed, it is validated by some of the intertextual elements of the novels, such as the Marx epigraph to certain chapters, which make clear that this novel is to a high degree preoccupied with social themes (cf. the Marx epigraph to chapter 12, *FLW*; 72, to name but one example).

4. 3. 2. The Critique of Metanarratives

4. 3. 2. 1. Rationality and the Marginalization and Reification of Women

As mentioned above, I will not explain in great detail what has been termed the *Politics of Representation* or *of Interpretation.* My discussion of *The Magus* should have made clear in which sense I understand these concepts. Consequently, I will not here comment on the various ways in which Charles (as well as other characters such as Dr Grogan) tries to make sense of Sarah's behaviour - let it suffice to say that as in the case of Nicholas in *The Magus*, their guesses as to what her behaviour represents are more often than not motivated by a projection of their own desires and wishes, and cannot always be seen as matter-of-fact. I might thus argue that Charles's and Grogan's impression that Sarah is mentally ill are not only motivated by her behaviour, but rather by their own interests: medico-psychological in the case of Grogan, and emotional-sexual in the case of Charles. For those interested in such an analysis, there are enough clues in the novel itself, as well as the analyses of most Fowles commentators (e.g. Acheson 1998).

Where *FLW* differs from, say, *The Magus* as far as the Politics of Representation are concerned, it does so by linking this concept with the critique of metanarratives. In this section, I will argue that some of the representative as well as interpretative failures of the main characters can be attributed to the respective metanarratives of their time that they endorse. My main case for this analysis is once again Charles. Already on a symbolic level, he is described as a man that is torn apart: not only is he torn apart between the two women, Sarah and Ernestina, the one representing an authentic choice while the other stands for the shallow conventions of the Victorian society, but also by his own embodiment of different doctrines: while he is a professed follower of Darwin, and thus regards progress and evolution as fundamental concepts of a scientific world-view which he is inclined to adopt, he is also interested in palaeontology, a science that by definition is concerned with the already-dead.

Both doctrines nevertheless show him to be a man with scientific interests, and we might be inclined to think that - as in a traditional Victorian no-

vel - the conflict of rational vs. emotional has been realised here along man vs. woman lines - especially so when we read that Ernestina, his fiancée, 'teased him then: the scientist, the despiser of novels.' (*FLW*; 15) While this seems cliché from our own 21st century point of view, Charles is also pictured as rising above the dominant doxa of his own time, and we learn that some of the attitudes he shows are really progressive for the kind of society he is living in:

> He shared enough of his contemporaries' prejudices to suspect sensuality in any form; but whereas they would, by one of those terrible equations that take place at the behest of the super-ego, have made Sarah vaguely responsible for being born as she was, he did not. For that we can thank his scientific hobbies. [Darwinism implies] philosophies that reduce morality to a hypocrisy and duty to a straw hut in a hurricane. (*FLW*; 99)

While Charles is enlightened enough to discard the identification of women and sin that is so obvious in characters such as Ms Poultney, his embracing of the values of the Enlightenment is not always motivated by purely altruistic reasons. As the above quote already indicates, the critique of the ethical concepts of Victorianism could also be used to sidestep what would otherwise have been identified as personal responsibility. Charles thus uses the prevailing opinion that women are intellectually less gifted than men in order to conceal his real motives from both Ernestina and himself:

> [H]e foresaw only too vividly that she might put foolish female questions, questions he could not truthfully answer without moving into dangerous waters. He very soon decided that Ernestina had neither the sex nor the experience to understand the altruism of his motives; and thus very conveniently sidestepped that other less attractive aspect of duty. (*FLW*; 134)

Not only does he insult Ernestina's intelligence in order to avoid her becoming jealous, it is also striking here that he misrepresents his own motives, because there is no doubt that at this point of the novel, he is in love with Sarah and altruism is, to put it mildly, not his only motive.

That Charles uses possible explanations for Sarah's behaviour according to the extent that they are in keeping with his own predilections is evident from the degree to which he believes Grogan's theory that Sarah is mentally ill. While he is first inclined to believe it (possibly on the grounds that it allows him to play the

male protector), he revises Grogan's judgement ('"You must not think she is like us men, able to reason clearly, examine her motives, understand why she must behave as she does. One must see her as being in a mist."' [*FLW*; 127]) as he is becoming convinced of her sincerity and personal authenticity: 'He strained her to him. The thought of such sacrifice made his eyes smart with tears. The injustice Grogan and he had done her! She was a nobler being than either of them.' (*FLW*; 276) In the moment of intimate physical contact with the object of his desire, it is also to supposed that the judgmental powers of Charles have been suspended in the very moment of his utterance.

While Grogan's analysis seems untenable to a 20th/21st century reader, what is typically postmodernist in *FLW* is the mixture of both complicity and critique. In spite of Grogan's analysis, Sarah is able to examine her own motives, but the way in which she does this restates Grogan's diagnosis of madness given earlier: '"A madness was in me at that time. I did not see it clearly till that day in Exeter. The worst you thought of me then was nothing but the truth."' (*FLW*; 351). Additionally, Sarah does not want to be categorized in rational or psychological terms, because these don't apply to her specific case, as she argues herself:

> 'You do not understand. It is not your fault. You are very kind. But I am not to be understood.'
> '(...) I think you make it a matter of pride.'
> 'I meant that I am not to be understood even by myself. And I can't tell you why, but I believe my happiness depends on my not understanding.'
> (...) 'This is absurdity. You refuse to entertain my proposal because I might bring you to understand yourself.'
> 'I refuse, as I refused the other gentleman, because you cannot understand that to me it is not an absurdity.' (*FLW*; 354)

In an existentialist interpretation of the novel, this remark of Sarah could be evaluated as another proof of her authenticity, because she develops and embodies her own set of values, even if they should be contrary to those adopted by the whole society around her.

I have already mentioned the fact that the marginalization of women in Victorian society is realized on the formal level of the novel by the adoption of the point of view of *selective omniscience*. '(...)Fowles denies us access to the workings of her mind. Except when she speaks to reveal what she is thinking,

Sarah is inscrutable: when she is silent, we can only guess at her motive.' (Acheson 1998; 41) For a reader conscious of the marginalization of women, such a technique offers the possibility to construct her own picture of Sarah's mind. But as the historian, who uses source texts that have been written from a certain, politically motivated point of view, has difficulty in deciding how to overcome that perspective, the reader cannot reconstruct the 'real' thoughts of Sarah by simply and arbitrarily filling in the gaps. The mere consciousness that all representation is politically motivated does not help overcome it. This is in keeping with the general male-oriented point of view that tends to objectify women, thus exemplifying another instance of the 'Collector Mentality' that is criticised in all of Fowles' fiction.

It is especially interesting that this 'Collector Mentality' seems to incorporate two principles that might seem contradictory at first sight: science and voyeurism. While science is generally considered as being disinterested, and voyeurism as extremely self-centred, Fowles shows us that the two can coincide. The apparent contradiction of the two concepts is resolved by Horlacher, who argues that both are instances of the 'objectifying look' which is generally the male gaze. In *FLW*, not only Charles, but also Dr Grogan exemplify this link between science and voyeurism, because both are scientists, both share beliefs which for their respective society can be considered 'enlightened' but both are also voyeurs (cf. Horlacher 1998; 54 f.). Combined with the point of view of selective omniscience, at least the male reader can be seem as being in complicity with the narrator. The complicity is heightened when Fowles, as he does in the very last chapters, conflates author and narrator (Horlacher 1998; 71 f.). Apart from the complicity, the novel also criticises the social system that underlies it. In this respect, it is important to note that the women who - in contrast to Sarah - have bowed to the expectations that Victorian society has placed upon them (Mrs Poulteney, Mrs Fairley and Ernestina), help to illustrate the fact that the roles that women can occupy within that society are defined by men - their specific conception of femininity only serves to perpetuate the dominant patriarchy. This is true because of the fact that this conception is one that they have taken over from men. Thus, in an argu-

ment similar to that of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, it is by and through the representation of women in specific ways that men are able to uphold their power (cf. Horlacher 1998; 90).

As a character, Sarah is used not only to exemplify, but also to deconstruct the stereotype of women that prevailed in Victorianism. By comparing her with his then future wife, Ernestina, Charles realizes that much of his fascination for Sarah is created by the fact that she defies being categorized by current stereotypes of women. What is more, her refusal to be understood by Charles (cf. above) can be interpreted as emphasizing the fact that each person has her own, particular system of values. While Charles is still determined to make her see that to come with him would be the rational choice, even if it runs contrary to the mores of Victorian society (and therefore would be a 'progressive' thing to do, given the circumstances), it is Sarah who makes him aware that his principles need not be hers. As many critics have noted, this serves not only to emphasize her authenticity, but also helps to show that Charles is still lacking personal authenticity, because he is - still - trying to use her for his own ends, exhibiting the Collector Mentality that reifies women and relegates them to the status of mere objects to be used for the achievement of male ends:

> It is irrational that Charles makes a Christ-like figure of a woman he had formerly feared as a fatal temptress, and cowardly in that he assumes that freedom is only bearable if there is someone with whom he can share the attendant anxiety. He has yet to acquire the courage to face life's dangers and complexities on his own. (Acheson 1998; 43)

The French Lieutenant's Woman, though, not only tells us something about the inappropriateness of the idealizing concept of women of the Victorian era. It also holds up the mirror to the contemporary reader in order to show him that in a certain sense, he too is a victim of what in our time and age counts as 'typically' Victorian. Once again, the technique to illustrate this point is an emphasizing of the particularity of the behaviour - and the mores - of different people. We may assume that a possible marriage of Charles with Ernestina would have resulted in mere conventionality. As Woodcock has argued, the Victorian attitude towards sexuality was one of duplicity: while the desire for sexual activity undoubtedly existed, the mores of society also conditioned a correspondent

feeling of guilt:

> The resultant schizophrenia among men which so often projected itself in terms of seeing women as virgins, whores or both, received one remarkable exposé in the book which Fowles' narrator cites as possibly 'the best guidebook to the age' (...), R.L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). (Woodcock 1984; 85)

It is clear that Charles, as do the other principle male characters in practically all of Fowles' fiction, exhibits his own version of this *madonna/whore*-complex, but this does not necessarily entail that it is a category that can be applied to all male characters of Fowles. The suggestion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* seems to be that the complex is a disorder mainly to be encountered in the upper layers of society, such as the landed gentry or the gentleman. Fowles' portray of the secondary characters such as Mary and Sam clearly reveals that such sexual duplicity was far less common among the lower orders. With the possible exception of Mrs Poulteney, no character in *FLW* seems to object to the happy and sometimes (for the standards of their time) provokingly overt relationship of the two servants. This is in keeping with the novel's general attitude that they represent the future, and not, as does Charles, the past (cf. above!!) and links the theme of sexual and emotional conduct with that of the development of society which they symbolize (cf. the following section): 'An astounding thought crossed Charles's mind: the lower orders were secretly happier than the upper.' (*FLW*; 231)

Fowles also tells us about women who have become the victims of the sexual mores of Victorianism, the most notable example being the prostitute that Charles visits in Exeter. One effect of the description he offers us is to see the phenomenon of prostitution as inevitably male-dominated, and finally conditioned by the fact that men were expected to maintain a mask of respectability in public, thus constituting another instance of the Politics of Representation: 'Exeter was, in all this, no exception - all the larger provincial towns of the time had to find room for this unfortunate army of female wounded in the battle for universal masculine purity.' (*FLW*; 217) While this surrogates sympathy for the women and criticises the male perspective, this very perspective is also used as an element of a highly dubious complicity between the reader and the narrator, who 'excuses the acti-

vities at Madame Terpsichore's with indulgent irony as "this ancient and time-honored form of entertainment".' (Woodcock 1984; 91 -the quote from *FLW* is on p. 240) This is in keeping with the sometimes voyeuristic position of the reader, which is allowed for by the partly identification of the points of view of both Charles and the narrator. Although the narrator is at other times clearly distinguished from both Charles and the author, the points of view also seem to coincide in crucial scenes. Consequently, Victorian moral duplicity in the form of the madonna/whore complex is not only being criticised, but serves also as a trap to lure the reader-as-voyeur into the story: Sarah

> (...) is presented as a dangerous woman, a *femme fatale* whose mystery derives in part from her status as social outcast and threat to the patriarchal order; and having been posed in this way, she *is* won and by force. Her dangerous quality is patently there as a spice to gratify male viewpoint (...) (Woodcock 1984; 100)

As a number of critics have observed, such an identification is mainly possible for a male reader of the novel, and this is one of the reasons why Woodcock argues that the position of the author, by the very choice of narrative means, is dubious at best. In a related vein, Horlacher (1998) analyses the novel's end and states that for all the deconstruction of Victorian stereotypes of women that the novel indulges in, the images it actually promotes are ultimately projections of either the novel's characters, or, more dangerously, those of its author/narrator. The two fundamental examples in this respect is the equivocation of *woman* and *mother* which takes place at the end of the novel (Horlacher 1998; 129) and Fowles' own claim that Charles is a surrogate for himself (cf. Horlacher 1998; 130).

I think that while the critique of the male point of view is necessary to the understanding of *FLW*, to reproach Fowles for adopting a point of view that simply satisfies the interests of his male readership is an over-interpretation. The ambiguity that results from this adoption of point of view is rather one that is in keeping with postmodernism's mixture of complicity and critique. As Charles has the chance to become more existentially authentic by being made to see which of his own prejudices have determined his attitude towards women, and consequently has the chance to overcome the Collector Mentality he exhibited before, so is the reader given the possibility to see that his own interests in the novel are perhaps

not only of an aesthetic or literary nature. By combining complicity with the reader and point of view, Fowles achieves the effect that the reader who reads the novel for the first time is epistemologically in a similar position as is Charles. If he is male, he will probably share the same delusions, as well as make the same misinterpretations that Charles does. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the purpose of the various narrative techniques employed by Fowles is a didactic one: the (male) reader has to learn the same lesson as Charles.

On the level of content, Sarah shows Charles by her refusal to join him again that to be with her simply is by no means a solution to the personal problems and anxieties that he still has to overcome:

> He (...) has already begun (...) to realize that life, however advantageously Sarah may in some ways seem to fit the role of Sphinx, is not a symbol, is not one riddle and one failure to guess it, is not to inhabit one face alone or to be given up after one losing throw of the dice (...) (FLW; 356)

But even if we accept this interpretation advocated by the text itself, it also remains clear that as a woman, Sarah is functionalized, and thus reified, simply because it is her who leads him to this self-awareness. Horlacher comments:

> Der Text verrät vielmehr die Hoffnung, die Frau werde, wie im Zusammenspiel von Charles und Sarah vorexerziert, den Mann durch das "weibliche Prinzip" erretten. Dabei handelt es sich um ein Prinzip, das - bei aller guten Absicht - von einem patriarchalen Standpunkt aus gedacht und in dem die Frau als Funktion des Männlichen konzipiert ist. (Horlacher 1998; 133)

As a first reaction, we might object to this analysis because we might argue that if the sexes of the characters were opposite, then men would be functionalized, but if we take into account the fact that the woman who saves a man or leads him towards a more clear conception of himself is a recurrent theme, and it is simply a fact that in such situations, Fowles assigns clear roles to the sexes. This very theme can also be found (if somewhat subdued) in *The Magus*, *The Ebony Tower* and *Daniel Martin*, whereas in *Mantissa* it will be presented as a bitter travesty.

4. 3. 2. 2. The Critique of the Concept of Progress

As we have seen above, some of Charles' opinions can be defined as rather progressive for his time. But as in the case of rationality and his treatment of women, there are also some elements in the novel that make us question whether or not Charles is really as progressive as he sometimes professes to be. A case in point is the novel's commitment to the theme of social class, which is evidenced by the frequent Marx captions to the individual chapters. As should be clear, Charles is living in an age which is characterised by increasing industrialization, and decreasing importance of the aristocracy. In such a society, a man like Charles, who is quasi-aristocrat and does not really have to work to make his living, living the life of a social drone, is, as are the fossils he is interested in, a species of the past. We have pointed out Charles' endorsement of the concept of progress above, but it seems a half-hearted endorsement that takes place on the level of ideas alone, since when he is actually presented with the possibility of earning his own money by participating in Mr Freeman's business, his first reaction is one of horror:

> 'I understand that commerce must seem abhorrent to you. It is not a gentleman's occupation.'
> 'That is mere cant, sir. You are yourself a living proof that it is so.'
> 'Do you mean that? Or are you perhaps but giving me another form of cant?'
> (...) Charles was at a loss for a moment
> (...)
> At least he realized what his father-in-law was driving at; and seeing his shock, the father-in-law hastily made way for the gentleman.
> (*FLW*; 226)

It is clear that Charles sympathises with the abolishing of the old order of society, but only insofar as it is compatible with his own interests. Despite his embracement of the notion of progress, he does not want to enter Mr Freeman's business. That he is rather a type of the past and not of the future can be seen when comparing him with Sam from an economical point of view. Sam, who is engaged with Mary, one of the servants of Mrs Poultney, who is about to leave Charles in order to open his own 'haberdashery' shop. As we learn at the end of the novel, in terms of savings and economical success, Sam outwits Charles considerably: 'Ten pounds a year may not seem much; but it was a third

of three years' wages, as Charles rapidly calculated; and made proportionally a much better showing in the thrift line than Charles himself could have offered.' (*FLW*; 257) This development is already foreshadowed at the beginning of the novel. Chapter seven is headed by a quote from Marx' *Kapital*, according to which the servant in modern societies is the equivalent of the slave (cf. *FLW*; 36). Notably, this is the very chapter in which Sam is introduced for the first time. But at this stage, Charles is still far from realizing that the social order is about to change, and that this change is one that will not be to his own benefit: 'But [Sam's] wrong a's and h's were not really comic; they were signs of a social revolution, and this was something that Charles failed to recognize.' (*FLW*; 39)

If we take progress as a standard to evaluate Charles as a person, it is a tragicomical and ironic picture that we get. While Charles is an avowed believer in progress, he represents the past in sociological terms, because he belongs to a group close to extinction: the aristocrats. Put in the terms of Darwin (whom he so much admires), he is a member of a social class that has failed to adopt to the new socio-economic circumstances (which in *FLW* are foreshadowed by the frequent quoting of Marx). In this respect, Charles' scientific hobby can be seen as doubly ironic: while his interest for palaeontology shows that he is a scientist, he is actually dealing with the past - which is, appropriately, the era to which his social type belongs.

4. 3. 3. *FLW* - High Art or Popular Culture?

One of the most striking features of *FLW*, as well as one of the reasons for it becoming a commercial success is the fact that the novel is one that is hard to put down once you started reading it. It is also one of Fowles' more 'accessible' books, written mainly in short chapters which often feature elements of suspense at their very ends. As we have seen, if literary modernism sometimes takes a hostile attitude towards any tendency of the reader to identify with (one of) the main character(s), *FLW* invites as well as questions such an identification.

On the other hand, the complicated narrative design, the importance that is allotted to the discussion of formal features and processes of writing within the

novel itself make it clear that this novel has not been written out of commercial interests or simply to drive home some vaguely existentialist meaning.

Combining elements of both worlds, *FLW* is a true example of a postmodernist novel; while its commercial success tells us something about the fact that it is a product of consumer capitalism and a part of the rather fuzzy category 'Popular Culture', the elaborate literary strategies employed also define it as a work of art in its own right. As readers we might feel invited to read the novel both ways, and perhaps this is the method to directly experience both the complicity and the critique that Fowles presumably wants us to adopt - not only towards the novel's central characters, but also towards the respective meta-narratives which they exemplify.

5. A Maggot

5. 1. Introduction

One of the first things that a reader will notice when reading *A Maggot* is the fact that this novel has almost no action or plot in the traditional sense. The novel is divided into parts, each of which is characterised by a specific point of view as well as a specific narrative gesture. In the first part of the novel, which comes closest to a traditional narrative, the reader is presented with the last moments in the lives of a group of at first anonymous travellers. In this group are Bartholomew, son of a Lord, his servant Dick, and Rebecca, a young woman of dubious origin, and former prostitute. They are accompanied by the actor Lacy and the rascal Jones. For the reader as well as the characters within the story, it is left unclear what sort of relationships hold between the various persons he is made acquainted with. As an example, I'd like to mention the fact that while at first, the impression is created the Rebecca accompanies the group for Bartholomew's pleasure, when Lacy reports to Bartholomew that he saw her sleeping with his servant Dick, Bartholomew retorts: "'May a man not lie with his own wife?"' (*AM*; 44) Red herrings abound in this first narrative part, for example Rebecca is introduced also by the names of Fanny or Louise, and Jones under the name of 'Farthing', such that a first time reader has to work out

the relations that hold between the characters in retrospect, deducing from the information tentatively provided by the protocols of Ayscough's clerk. At the end of the first part, Dick is found dead, the horse of Bartholomew being tied to a mast, and he himself has disappeared.

The main part of the novel is devoted to the proceedings of the lawyer Ayscough, who on the request of Bartholomew's father questions all the travellers, as well as the persons they encountered during their journey, in order to try and find out what had happened to Bartholomew, who is not to be found. As readers, we are presented with the protocols made by Ayscough's clerk, John Tudor, which constitute the main body of the novel.

To trace the information that Ayscough gets by questioning the characters mentioned above, as well as those who had to do with them, would be beyond the scope of this study. Fowles deliberately alludes to possible explanations for the disappearance of Bartholomew, none of which are ultimately convincing. The most likely interpretation, which is provided by Rebecca, is that he has undergone a profound religious or esoteric experience which comes close to a revelation, but which in the narrative of Rebecca, by then a member of the Shaker community, also reads like a horror trip. Once again, this novel contains the theme of a woman helping a man to overcome what has been described as ‘Collector Mentality' above. The cases are not as clear as in the other novels. After all, Bartholomew cannot be subsumed in the category 'scientist' because of his esoterical/quasi-religious convictions (evidenced by the mysterious papers in his box). More of a scientist is Ayscough, for whom the only standard seems to be rationality. It is clear that Rebecca's testimony makes him question the validity of rationalism, but it is not clear that she helps him towards more knowledge about himself or authenticity, as was the case in *FLW* or *The Magus*. On the other hand, Rebecca feels that despite - and even in virtue - of the bad way that Bartholomew treated her, she was able to realize that being a prostitute was a wrong way of life that had to be abandoned. In this very special sense, this is the first novel of Fowles in which a man - even if unintentionally - has the function of leading a woman towards self-awareness or authenticity.

Since the main part of the novel is constituted by the protocols of Ays-

cough's interrogation, the reader is epistemologically in a similar position as the lawyer, and therefore comprehends the difficulty of his endeavour, as the different characters contradict not only each other, but themselves as well:

> A. I told tales everywhere we went, sir. Mirrors for larks, as they say.
> (...)
> Q. You tell me, you are now positive you was mistaken?
> A. Yes, sir. Was I not?
> Q. Why ask you?
> A. That you should seem to doubt it, sir. 'Twas whist, whist, I smell a bird's nest. A fancy I took, that was wrong.
> Q. You are positive she was not what you thought?
> A. I took Mr Bartholomew's word, sir. Or rather, Mr Lacy's taking of his word as to who she was. 'Twas well for him, 'twas well for me.
> (*AM*; 204 f.)

Ayscough's task is made more difficult by the fact that his prime witness, Rebecca, offers only a religious explanation for the disappearance of Bartholomew, claiming that he has gone to 'June Eternal', a religiously inspired other world ruled by 'Holy Mother Wisdom', a kind of female godlike principle, which is probably dangerous from the point of view of Ayscough, because there, as Rebecca reports, '(...) it seemed all did live in common, without distinction nor difference' (*AM*; 373). Given the fact that Ayscough is interested in a rational explanation of the disappearance of Bartholomew, and in the maintenance of the prevailing social order, the explanation that Rebecca actually gives frustrates all of his expectations.

On the level of *histoire*, the novel ends openly: while Ayscough has to write to Bartholomew's father that all his efforts have remained fruitless, the narrator enters the story in an unsigned epilogue which warns us not to advance the interpretation that the baby that is mentioned as Rebecca's would later, and in the real world, become the founder of the Shaker community:

> Readers who know something of what that Manchester baby was to become in the real world will not need telling how little this is a historical novel. I believe her actual birth was two months before my story begins, on 29 February 1736. (*AM*; 455)

The obvious vagueness of the quote here rather serves to make the reader who does not know what became of the baby in the real world will now be on the track to find that out, even if he is warned against it. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that Fowles wants us to occupy ourselves with the theme of the Sha-

ker movement, but not for its religious, but for its social content:

> In so much else we have developed immeasurably from the eighteenth century; with their central plain question - what morality justifies the flagrant injustice and inequality of human society? - we have not progressed one inch. (*AM*; 459)

Social injustice is, as we will see, an issue that features prominently in *A Maggot*, and is linked once again to the discourses of power, rationality, men, representation and its politics.

5. 2. Problems of Realism in *A Maggot*

5. 2. 1. Intertextuality as a Means of Creating and Subverting Realism

There are five types of texts in *A Maggot*:

(a) the protocols made by Ayscough's clerk John Tudor,

(b) the narratives to be found at the beginning and the end of the novel, and in between the interrogations,

(c) the comments of an intrusive narrator, who is not always identified with the author Fowles,

(d) the reports that Ayscough both recieves, and those that he sends to Bartholomew's father (both in the form of letters) and

(e) extracts from contemporary sources such as *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

In contrast to the other novels, intertextuality does play a somewhat minor role in *A Maggot*. The extracts from the *Gentleman's Magazine* constitute a genuine case of intertextuality to be found in this novel. The most important function that the extracts have is the production of a realistic atmosphere within the novel by providing the reader with some detailed knowledge of the 18th century. Several cases of capital punishment for such minor offences as theft are mentioned. When Ayscough threatens Jones 'I'll have thee swung for a horse-stealer, if not for murderer' (*AM*; 213), he is not exaggerating, even if we can see it as a point in his favour that none of the people he interrogates is actually punished. The Quakers are also mentioned in the *G.M.*, so that their incorporation into the body of the novel's text (Rebecca's parents are reported to be Quakers) seems likely enough.

The mixture of the narrative and descriptive texts is most prominent in the letters that Ayscough writes. His first letter to Bartholomew's father mentions directly the story of Captain Porteous as referred in the *G.M.*, who had been reprimanded for shooting into a crowd of gathering people. While such punishment of an official would clearly be considered the right thing to do in our own century, Ayscough complains about it, thus showing the reactionary attitude which characterises him, and which will be worked out in more detail. Another example is a digression by the narrator, in which he informs us that Ayscough, as a young man, had read Defoe's satire 'The Shortest Way With The Dissenters', in which Defoe ironically advocates capital punishment.

> The joke misfired, because some of the Tories took his grotesquely draconian solution literally and declared his pamphlet excellent. (...) One of his victims had been young Ayscough, who at the time had Tory views. (*AM*; 236)

The status of descriptive texts such as newspapers is questioned as well, and Fowles seems to be conscious of the fact that the form in which a text is presented may exert a similar influence on the reader as does the type of text. As an example, I'd like to mention the fact that while a lot of background information about the historical and political context is being provided by the extracts from the *G.M.*, the death of Dick is allegedly referred by a newspaper as well, but this time it is the 'Western Gazette' which is not mentioned anywhere else in the novel (*AM*; 61). While the *G.M.* is reprinted *facsimile*, which serves to highlight its presumed authenticity, the extract from the 'Western Gazette' appears in the same typography as the other parts of the novel's fictional text. As readers, we might wonder whether or not this has anything to do with the representational quality of it. Fowles plays with the expectations of the readers as far as different typographical representations are concerned, since especially for a 20th/21st century reader, the 'old' typography might be a clue to the fact that (s)he is reading an authentic text. On the other hand, for a reader conscious of living in an age of the *simulacrum*, this might simply be another pose of the text.

If the extracts from the *G.M.* works to heighten the impression of realism, they are also used to undermine and doubt it, and it is especially remarkable that

this doubt is engendered by a descriptive rather than a fictional text. As a number of critics have observed, while the extracts from the *G.M.* sometimes work to give credibility to the characters and the plot of the novel, they often seem to work against realism, and especially so for a 20th/21st century reader who has had some experience in reading tabloid papers:

> But what are we to make of some of the magazine's truly bizarre stories - for example the one in the October number, about a peculiar fish thrown ashore in Devon? It is '4 Foot long', *The Gentleman's Magazine* tells us, 'has a Head like a Toad, 2 feet like a Goose and the Mouth opens 12 Inches wide' (409). Did this freak of nature really exist? Are we truly to believe that 'One of this Kind was dissected at the College of Physicians in the presence of K. *Charles* II'? (409). Or is this just a rather juicy story some journalist made up in order to sell magazines? (Acheson 1998; 81)

What Fowles questions by using such narrative strategies is not only the validity of information when presented in a specific way, but he also shows that doubts concerning the 'truthfulness' of texts are not a product of the 20th/21st century. By also realizing the importance that such texts have for our understanding of past events - despite their problematic status -, Fowles does not subscribe to Baudrillard's thesis that we are living in an age of total hyperreality, in which the simulacrum has replaced the real, but rather takes on a typical postmodernist attitude of complicity and critique at the same time.

5. 2. 2. More Clues to the Past

That Fowles is obsessed with the problem of how we can know anything about past events from our own contemporary perspective is clearly evidenced by the problematic status of the intertexts as analysed in the above section. Another strategy employed to this effect is the incorporation of supposedly factual details of the time in which the novel is set, i.e. the 18th century. The *Gentleman's Magazine* itself can be subsumed in this category, because readers eager enough to check it will find out that it is not a figment of Fowles' imagination, but rather a journal that actually existed.

Another example is the mentioning of the mathematician Saunderson, with whom Bartholomew allegedly has had correspondence about problems of mathematics. Here we find Fowles operating on the fictional as well as the descriptive

level, since that Saunderson should write a letter to Ayscough is clearly a fictional element of the novel. The case is different with some of the claims made by Saunderson himself. While it is quite plausible for a 20th/21st century reader that his 'most illuminate ante-predecessor *in cathedra Lucasiana*' had been Sir Isaac Newton (*AM*; 193), this is not the case for his supposed direct predecessor Mr Whiston (*ibid.*). A reader who takes no effort to check the relevant university chronicles will have to resort to speculation if she wants to comment on the exactness of the information given.

We do not have to resort to speculation, though, if we want to comment on the existence of Saunderson, because we can check the relevant literature. In *The Elements of Algebra In Ten Books, To which is prefixed, An Account of the Author's Life and Character, Collected from his oldest and most intimate acquaintance* (1740), we are informed not only that he was actually a professor of mathematics at Cambridge university, but also that '[u]pon the removal of Mr. Whiston from his Professorship, Mr. Saunderson's Mathematical Merit was universally allowed so much superior (...)' (Saunderson 1740; vi), that he was given a degree in order to fill that post. It is also true, according to this source, that he had a daughter and a son, named Anne and John. That Whiston was expelled from the university because of his 'heretical' religious views is witnessed by the *Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved at the Library of the University of Cambridge* (Williams et al. 1867; 76, #338 and 82, #400), from which we also know that the year of his expulsion had been 1710. Saunderson's blindness is mentioned by Diderot's *Lettre Sur Les Aveugles* de 1749 (cf. Diderot 1972). Here, Diderot takes him as an example of a blind man to argue for his theory of sense data and a discussion about the question whether or not the blind can form an idea of God. What is important here is that Diderot is our witness that Saunderson actually existed, and that he was blind, a fact that is commented on by his daughter Anne, who - according to Fowles - writes on behalf of her father (cf. *AM*; 192 and 195). For all the historical accuracy that we can trace here, it is clear that the supposed letter that Saunderson's daughter writes on his behalf to Ayscough is a product of Fowles' imagination. We are presented here with a literary strategy that we are already familiar with from *FLW*, and which consists of mixing accu-

rate historical details with imagined facts which could plausibly be integrated into the historical facts. Combined with the fact that Saunderson's removal is endorsed by the reactionary Ayscough (whose interest, as we will see later, is the maintenance of the existent social order),we may speculate whether the expulsion of Whiston has not had political motives.

The case is different when other details that are mentioned in the novel are checked, such as the place of the action. The only detailed description of place that is given in the novel (apart from the rather obscure description of the scene where both Bartholomew and Rebecca have their religious visions) is one of the towns that the group of travellers pass at the beginning of the novel. Despite the fact that Fowles describes the town in rather factual terms, any attempt to locate it on a map is bound to be frustrated:

> Here what seems to be a real town, C- , a town real enough for the Bristol lawyer, Richard Pygge, to visit, and to ride to the cavern nearby, does not exist. It is a fiction based on Castleton, in Derbyshire, a town visited by Pastor Moritz, many miles away.
> (Acheson 1998; 80)

In the following section, I will analyse to what extent the question of how we can get to know anything about past events is realized by using the strategy that I have called 'diachronic narration' in the discussion of *FLW*, which is probably the formal strategy by which Fowles most strongly comments on this very question.

5. 2. 3. Diachronistic Narration in *A Maggot*

As is the case with *FLW*, so *AM* is a novel that is obsessed with the question of how we can come to know anything about past events from a contemporary perspective, and here, it is the 18th rather than the 19th century which is under close scrutiny. Once again, one of the means by which this questioning is realized is diachronistic narration. *AM* often tells us about the 18th century from an unconcealed contemporary point of view, and the implicit thesis seems to be once again that this kind of switch of idiom is indispensable for a contemporary reader to get a realist picture of the past.

An exemplary realization of this technique is the description of Rebecca's husband John Lee, in which the characterisation at first given ('an ignorant

mystic') is qualified in the very next sentence:

> To speak so is anachronistic. Like so many of his class at this time, he still lacks what even the least intelligent human today, far stupider even than he, would recognize - an unmistakable sense of personal identity set in a world to some degree, however small, manipulable and controllable by that identity. John Lee would not have understood *Cogito, ergo sum*; and far less its even terser modern equivalent, *I* am. The contemporary I does not need to think, to know it exists. (*AM*; 389)

Fowles compares the different respective conceptions of 'personal identity' in both the 18th and the 20th/21st century. Only by describing the 18th century concept in contemporary terms is he able to convey an impression to the contemporary reader that can be considered 'realistic'. But even this very description itself is questioned a couple of sentences further down, as we are suddenly informed that even in the 18th century, there were some people who *had* a sense of personal identity. By stressing the fact that those who had this sense were for the main part those people whom we know from 'official' historiography, (and not 'common' people such as John Lee) the particularity of all representation of past events is accentuated:

> To be sure the *intelligentsia* of John Lee's time had a clear, almost but not quite modern, sense of self; but the retrospective habit we have of remembering and assessing a past age by its Popes, its Addisons and Steeles, its Johnsons, conveniently forgets how completely untypical artistic genius is of most human beings of any age, however much we force it to be the reverse. (*ibid.*, my emphasis)

Once again, the treatment is a mixture of both complicity and critique. While on the one hand, we are informed that traditional historiography is only interested in the unusual events that mark a decisive change, thus deferring 'everyday life' to the margins of its interests, on the other hand a remedy for this insufficiency is hard to find. After all, a form of historiography that didn't single out exemplary phenomena, and thus structure them, would have no explanatory value at all. It is the novel's preoccupation with 'ordinary characters' that provides the reader with a fuller picture of 18th century ordinary life, and consequently, the fictional parts of the novel complement the allegedly historical ones. What this shows is first of all that historiography is also in need of fictional elements to provide a unified account. While serving as appropriate background information to create

a realistic atmosphere, the reader sometimes feels better informed by the fictional passages that not only inform us about the problems of the higher social orders. This will be a point to take up when discussing the metanarrative of the need to preserve the existent social order, a theme that figures promptly in *A Maggot*.

5. 2. 4. Point of View in *A Maggot*

From a technical point of view, one of the things that strikes us first as we read *A Maggot* is the relentless changing of narrative perspective. While the introductory narration is made by an omniscient narrator, the main part of the book consists of the protocols that Ayscough's clerk Tudor has made during the interrogations. Consequently, each 'deposition' reveals the point of view of one of the characters, and one of the things that baffles both Ayscough as well as the readers of the novel is the fact that all of them tell different stories, and Rebecca's story (which seems to be advocated by the narrator) is from all the most incredible. Epistemologically, the reader is limited to the same amount of information that Ayscough is presented with, and this allows for an understanding of, if not identification with, Ayscough's quest for truth. Reading Ayscough's letters as well, the reader is also in a position similar to that of Bartholomew's father, to whom Ayscough's correspondence is addressed.

The problem of point of view is problematized in the novel itself, because Fowles both invokes as well as breaks the standards and procedures of a traditionally omniscient narrator. While the first part of the novel starts as if written by an omniscient narrator, this impression is heavily qualified:

> Fowles' dissatisfaction with conventional omniscient narration is most evident in the introductory section of *A Maggot*, which focuses on a night spent by five travellers in the West Country town of C-. Throughout, he uses the present tense rather than the past, as if to suggest that his character's future is something he has not yet witnessed and is therefore unable to reveal to us. In addition, he makes it clear that he knows no more about the novel's characters than anyone else who might have met them on the road for the first time. (Acheson 1998; 79)

On the other hand, the novel draws heavily on the effects of what I have called diachronic narration in the precedent section. It is clear that such statements, which may encompass several centuries at once, can only be made by some-

body occupying an ideally omniscient perspective:

> (...) as if a century before, in James I's or Elizabeth's reign, the house had been a finer place, where even those who lived or worked in the half-cellar were counted deserving for such elaborate joinery. In truth it had served as a shop to the merchant clothier who then lived above. It was his customers who were granted such noble beams. (*AM*; 292)

Sometimes, the information that is passed on to the reader is from a very limited point of view indeed. At one point Ayscough sends his clerk Tudor to go and fetch some water for Rebecca. As Tudor leaves the room, the text is interrupted, because it has been him who has written down the conversation of Rebecca and Ayscough. In a *Tristram-Shandy*-like manner, we are almost presented with a blank page (*AM*; 318). The game is repeated with changing roles as Tudor and Rebecca leave the room to have something to eat: this time, the reader is not being informed about what Ayscough might be doing during their absence (*AM*; 324). This change once again invokes the presence of an omniscient author, while each individual constituent would have spoken against it, for only an ideally omniscient author can switch between the limited perspectives of different individuals.

Now, the changing between different levels of omniscience is not a typically postmodernist strategy *per se*, but what is worth remembering here is that: first, Fowles makes us aware of the particularity of different points of view; second, in comments such as the above one, he also shows that certain forms of representation may have political motivations; and, third, he shows that even if we take into account several of the many particular views of different individuals, we do not necessarily get a unified picture. It will be worth keeping these points in mind when analysing the political metanarratives that are being used in *A Maggot*.

The changing perspectives also illustrate a fundamental feature of postmodernist aesthetics: while the theorists of the *nouveau roman* advocated the retreat of the author, Fowles is aware that if he wants to write at all, as much as he might be interested in the freedom of his characters, he is ultimately their creator. Postmodernist literature is thus filtered through the critique that the omniscient author of literary realism had been subjected to in modernism, but

also conscious of the fact that a total absence of author and/or narrator is virtually impossible. Consequently, Fowles leaves it to the reader to speculate whether or not Rebecca is a free person: '(...) and how different from them she has chosen, *or has been chosen*, to be.' (*AM*; 320, my emphasis) In this manner, some of the traditional tasks of the writer are transferred to the reader, illustrating once again Hassan's claim that in postmodernist literature, the reader has to act writerly.

5. 2. 5. The Critique of Metanarratives

5. 2. 5. 1. The Deconstruction of Rationalism and Positivism in

The critique of both Rationalism and Positivism is more prominent in *A Maggot* than in *FLW,* which may have something to do with the time in which it is set. It is in the 18th century that the Rationalism of Descartes, as well as the Empiricism of Locke were universally known, let alone acknowledged and accepted. As Fowles makes clear, 'Nature' was then conceived to be the antithesis of both Rationalism and Empiricism:

> [Nature] was aggressive wilderness, an ugly and all-pervasive reminder of the Fall, of man's eternal exile from the Garden of Eden; and particularly aggressive, to a nation of profit-haunted puritans, on the threshold of an age of commerce, in its flagrant uselessness. (*AM*; 15)

The most obvious defender of these ideals is Ayscough, as is also evidenced by the form of the depositions: their refusal to report on the emotions or the outward appearance of the characters is in keeping with the ideal to simply and only refer what can be described as factual evidence.

But the rationalism and ratiocentrism of Ayscough are also critically undermined, because he himself does occasionally violate them. If we analyse some of his prejudices from a 20th/21st century point of view, we have to categorize them as being plainly irrational. For example, Ayscough hates the Welsh, and this contempt shows plainly in his unsympathetic treatment of Jones, in which he combines both ratiocentrism and racism: '"Jones, I warn thee. Thou reek'st of lies as thy country's breath doth stink of leeks."' (*AM*; 210) But this contemporary reproach is then heavily qualified, and we are even invited to see Ayscough in more positive

terms: 'The lawyer's crudely chauvinistic contempt for his witness is offensive, but it is stock, and really has to do little with poor Jones's Welshness' (*AM*; 232).

On the other hand, Ayscough not only shows contempt for the Welsh on an emotional, but a formal level as well, and prohibits that Tudor write the answers that Jones gives in his mother tongue. In contrast to this marginalization of the Welsh tongue, Latin is allotted a superior position because it happens to be the language *par excellence* of Rationalism. When Jones indicates that he knows the real name of Bartholomew's father, Ayscough forbids him to say it, and advises his clerk to simply write *'respondet'* (*AM*; 212).

Ayscough's preference for hard facts can be seen by the way he treats the actor Lacy during his deposition, which is characterised by a general mistrust for actors. The low esteem that Ayscough has for actors is attributable to his quasi-Aristotelian position that language should be used to describe hard facts only, and that any metaphorical or figurative form of speech is highly suspicious. At least this is the first impression that a reader will have when he is reading statements such as the following: '"And do not try your hollow airs upon me. It is not so long since that your kind were publicly flogged for their pains. I advise you to put your buskins by. This is a chamber of the law. No playhouse, where you can strut (...)"' (*AM*; 115).

At the end of Lacy's deposition, this impression gives way to a different conception. Meanwhile, Ayscough has learned that in virtue of his training as an actor, Lacy possesses an astounding ability to remember people and places in great details, and therefore his deposition is far more valuable for Ayscough than those of the other witnesses. While a contempt for actors would be in keeping with the overall chauvinistic impression of Ayscough, the reader is made aware of how his momentary motives might influence the way he expresses himself. Ayscough's own explanation is as plausible as his alleged chauvinism, so as readers, we simply don't know whether his unfriendliness is due to his contempt for Lacy, or rather a sophisticated way to coax the truth out of him: '"Lacy, I thank you for your evidence, and hope we part on better terms than we began. You will allow we must both be actors on occasion, though it is for different ends."' (*AM*; 185)

Ayscough's way of systematizing the different evidence into one coherent picture can be deduced from the depositions as well. For him, it is extremely important that the witnesses only report what they had seen with their own eyes, and at several points, he has to remind them not to report from hearsay (*AM*; 66). The empirical evidence thus comes first for Ayscough, and only later are the standards of Logic or Rationalism employed to evaluate those facts, as we can see by the fact that he positively looks for contradiction:

> Did he not say earlier to you that man is able to choose and so change his course - now the very opposite, that his history is predestined, if it may be read in days to come, and we are no more than the fixed characters of a play or book already written? (*AM*; 151)

The character who most frustrates Ayscough's rationalist method is Rebecca whose deposition might be categorized as 'irrational' by a 20th/21st century reader as well - so fantastic in the true sense of the word are her descriptions of the maggot and of 'June Eternal'. Strangely enough, Ayscough does not threaten her as he does with his male witnesses, and this might be due to the fact that she is a woman to whom he owes more respect and decency, another reason, which is as plausible, is the fact that Rebecca's deposition baffles him, and he does not know what to object from a rational point of view. Nevertheless, he tries to develop a coherent picture. He also gives her ample opportunity to revise what she has said, a possibility that is not open to the other witnesses, and even invites her to recant her testimony. This again reveals his ratiocentrism, for he does so utilising an argument that goes right back to Descartes:

> Now I ask you mistress, you were hot, were you not out of your wits with the sun and your walking? I do not say you lie, yet that there was some disorder in your spirits, and you saw what was never there in front of you, but had pushed forth from your heated mind in the semblance of reality? (*AM*; 357)

In keeping with the concept of the Politics of Representation, Ayscough's preference for a descriptive rather than figurative language can be attributed to the political and social ends he tries to promote, which can be characterised as the maintenance of the status quo. This end, in turn, is attributable to the fact that for Ayscough, the status quo is one of power in virtue of his position in social

hierarchy. He knows that any other hierarchy would deprive him of some of the advantages that the narrator describes him to enjoy (*AM*; 234 f.). His occasional gibes at (for his age) new fictional forms, such as the satire, has therefore political rather than aesthetic motives: he characterises Fielding's *Pasquin* as 'impudent new satire' and describes the *Beggar's Opera* as 'its equal in impertinence' (*AM*; 117).

But the pose of rationalism is not being maintained consistently even by Ayscough himself, who occasionally has resort to what from a contemporary point of view must seem a manifestation of obvious superstition, and therefore irrationality: 'Ayscough sips his medical purl (ale laced with the recently mentioned prophylactic against witches and the Devil, wormwood) (...)' (*AM*; 232).

A counterpart to the rationalism of Ayscough is Bartholomew's servant Dick, who is both deaf and mute. Because of his disability, Dick is mocked by the other characters, especially Jones, who make fun of him and call him an idiot. His muteness parallels a description given by Foucault (1973). In *Histoire de la Folie*, Foucault identifies as one of the most effective mechanisms with which reason excludes and marginalizes unreason, that of denying unreason any form to articulate itself. In this sense, it is symptomatic that, with the exception of Bartholomew and Rebecca, everybody treats him as an idiot, and simply because he cannot articulate himself in their manner. That Dick is really an idiot is far from clear, as the intrusive narrator reveals: 'Yet there is nothing of the idiot about his own face. Beneath its regularity, even handsomeness - the mouth is particularly strong and well-shaped - there lurks a kind of impertubable gravity, an otherness.' (*AM*; 33) In keeping with the mechanism identified by Foucault, the example of Dick illustrates that physical and mental handicaps were not accurately differentiated in the 18th century.

Bartholomew seems to have more sympathy for him: 'Without me he would be a wild creature, no better than a beast, the butt of the village clowns - if they had not long before stoned him to death.' (*AM*; 170) But whether or not being with Bartholomew is really better for Dick than any other imaginable situation, is a matter hard to decide for the reader. Likewise, we cannot decide whether Bartholomew uses Rebecca for his own ends (his alleged impotence

problem) or to make her a better person.

While Ayscough's ratiocentrism and positivism is put to the test during testimony of Rebecca, it seems totally appropriate as he questions Jones. Significantly, it is while questioning Jones that Ayscough violates his own principle not to have things reported by hearsay, as he lets him tell what happened to Bartholomew and Rebecca in the cavern (*AM*; 229). At this stage of the novel, such procedure is understandable on behalf of Ayscough, since Rebecca has not yet been found. As will become evident later, Ayscough's original principle was the proper standard to adopt, because Rebecca confesses having told Jones not the truth, but rather a fantastic story that she invented for the sake of plaus ibility: 'I told him what he may believe' (*AM*; 304). In her answers to Ayscough, Rebecca does not seem to act on a similar principle, as is evident by the obvious incredulity that he shows as far as the more fantastic elements of her testimony are concerned. She replies that his failure to understand might be due to the fact that he's applying the wrong standards:

> Q. I may sooner believe thee thy three witches that was told to Jones, and the Devil at thy tail, than this.
> A. That is, thee art men. Thee'd make me mirror of thy sex. Dost know what a harlot is, master Ayscough? What all men would have all women be, that they may the easier think the worst of them. (*AM*; 360).

It is Ayscough's preconceptions that keep him from seeing the truth of Rebecca's testimony, and as will be revealed in a conversation of Rebecca and Tudor later on, there is a considerable difference in the respective meta-narratives of Truth adopted by Ayscough and Rebecca. While the first will have only empirical and/ or rational truth, what matters for Rebecca is religious truth, a truth that cannot be empirically tested:

> '"There are two truths, mistress. One that a person believes is truth; and one that is truth incontestible. We will credit you the first, but the second is what we seek."
> "I must tell what I believe."' (*AM*; 348 f.)

Because of the simple fact that Bartholomew is not found and cannot tell us his version of the events, it cannot really be said that the rationalist method of Ayscough is really being discredited in the novel. The sympathy that the reader will

develop for his undertaking suggests the contrary. It is rather that on the level of the plot, the extreme difficulty of knowing something about relatively close past events - be it by empirical evidence or by some more story-like, fantastico-religious revelation -, is manifested in a postmodernist way that invokes and undermines both rationalism and religious revelation. For the reader, this problem is intensified because he also has to bear in mind that the shorthand transcriptions made by the clerk Tudor might be erroneous, as he himself confesses: '"The short hand? By practice. 'Tis child's play, once learnt. And where I cannot read when I copy in the long hand, why, I make it up. So I may hang a man, or pardon him, and none the wiser"' (*AM*; 347).

Ayscough's attempts to collect material evidence are doomed, too. He sends his assistant Pygge to the place that Jones had indicated, but all to no avail. Once again, empirical data are at one and the same time valuable information (Pygge's description of them place coincides with that of Jones, and thus there is intersubjective verifiability) as well as adding up to an already complex riddle (the only physical evidence Pygge is able to collect is a mysterious piece of earth hardened by heat, but any further analysis proves to be fruitless) (*AM*; 287 f.).

Many other examples that reveal the questionable status of our procedures to make sense of past events could be quoted here, but I think that for the present, it is better to state that by transposing the epistemological problem of having access to past events onto the level of action, it has a different status here. While in *FLW*, this question is mainly addressed to the reader reading the past, it is realised on the level of the plot in *A Maggot*. What *A Maggot* shares with the other novels is the mixture of both complicity and critique as far as the assumed superior status of rationalist and empiricist procedures and methods are concerned.

5. 2. 5. 2. Power Revealed: The Marginalization of Women and the Politically Progressive

We have already seen in *FLW* what is meant by the meta-narrative of man's superiority and how it becomes manifest in the representations that men make of women. It is a true instance of what Hutcheon has called the Politics of Representation. Because men have had control over the representational

media, it is small wonder that the representation of women is according to male standards. Since it is set in the 18th century, *A Maggot* once again makes us aware of this power exerted, as well as deconstructs it. What can be defined as typically postmodern is the awareness of the fact that a simple repudiation of the biased representations is not possible, for sometimes they constitute our only access at all to the past (cf. Hutcheon 1989; 58).

With Henry Ayscough, Rebecca is presented with an antagonist who is somewhat different from Charles Smithson in *FLW*, because while the latter is at least theoretically interested in social change, the former is clearly intent on preserving the *status quo*, and his personal interests play a significant role in it (cf. above).

As far as the marginalization of women is concerned, Ayscough shows a different characterization of women. Not commenting on their rationality, what he sees as most dangerous is his belief that women seem to have a natural propensity for sin. But he also knows how to differentiate, as is shown by his polite treatment of Dorcas Hellyer, while the owner of the brothel, Claiborne, is treated with unconcealed contempt. That he is a reactionary as well as a nationalist is evidenced by the fact that he believes foreign whores to be more dangerous (*AM*; 190). That he accepts the dominant meta-narrative of his time which sees women as reproductive receptacles at best is evidenced by the fact that to have children seems to him to be their natural task:

> Q. She was by child?
> A. No, she is barren naturally.
> Q. Unnaturally (...). (*AM*; 158)

In this respect, it is important to note that Ayscough shows complicity with other male characters, most notably Jones, for whom he had so much contempt in the first place. His advice 'Thou shouldst have unfrocked her piety whilst thou hadst the chance' (*AM*; 273) is an invitation to rape. This is in turn justified by his belief that while male lust is justified, 'womanly lust' is illicit. By acknowledging the existence of female lust, Ayscough is in a certain sense more progressive than, say, Mrs Poulteney, but the moral judgement is more or less the same:

Q. Did Dick come privately to you?
A. Yes.
Q. And you lay with him?
A. Yes.
Q. Were you not tired by then of his attentions?
A. I accepted them as before, tho' not as harlot.
Q. Out of pity, you would say?
A. Yes.
Q. Did he not arouse thy womanly lust?
A. That is not thy business. (*AM*; 331)

As in the above quotation, Rebecca often reproaches Ayscough for transgressing the limits of her privacy, and she seems to see it as her task to make him aware that some of the clichés in his mind are not factual truths about women, but rather constructs that men have found pleasing. It is because men have power over the representative media as well as the ways in which women articulate themselves that a 'womanly truth' can neither be uttered nor established:

Q. How, are all women whores?
A. Whores in this. We may not say what we believe, nor say what we think for fear we be mocked because we are women. If men think a thing be so, so must it be, we must obey. I speak not of thee alone, it is so with all men, and everywhere. (*AM*; 421)

While Rebecca seems to be advancing a revolutionary doctrine which, in its emphasis on the equality of both men and women, is unwelcome in her own Shaker community as well (cf. *AM*; 394), Ayscough suddenly becomes aware of the existence of the Politics of Representation, as he recognises that the ideals embraced may influence the version of the story somebody tells: 'I would have what you saw, mistress; not what your new-found democracy now puts upon it.' (*AM*; 370)

This is again questions as Rebecca has to ask Ayscough what the word 'democracy' means. Nevertheless, her egalitarian principles show that although she may lack his verbosity, she knows better what democracy means in practice, and this is what matters. Her social theory is also radically anti-materialist, which irritates Ayscough, as he makes clear when questioning Jones:

A. That wealth was the great corruption in men's mind, a blindfold upon their true conscience, and the world a most damned place until such day as they see it.
Q. She spake seditiously, in short? (*AM*; 271)

As the intrusive narrator makes clear, not even Ayscough can stop the world from changing, and therefore Jones, who even for a 20th/21st century reader has some highly dubious character traits, 'is in many ways (...) the future' (*AM*; 237).

As indicated above, the novel also forecloses any easy condemnation of Ayscough on behalf of the reader. The reader shares his quest for an explanation of Bartholomew's disappearance, is left to the same epistemological devices. After the sometimes harsh and unrespectful treatment of the witnesses, readers will be surprised to read Ayscough's very open-minded conclusion in the account he sends to Bartholomew's father: 'For much it is clear that she was grossly practised upon by his Lordship and his man, and that their practice did but swell and ripen those unseemly resentments she had gained from her life in the bagnio' (*AM*; 441).

That religion may be used not only to reform society, but also to maintain the *status quo*, can be seen at the hand of Ayscough's thesis that the reformatory element in Rebecca's doctrine is due to the fact that she has never been presented with a 'right' interpretation of religion - the 'right' interpretation obviously being the one in which the woman is reduced to man's reproductive half:

> Lee is the more strong in her perversity, Yr Grace will devine, for that the *rota fortunae* did bring her greatly above her destined station, notwithstanding it were by vice and immodesty. *She was never, as is the commonality of her sex, brought to know God's wisdom in decreeing for them their natural place as helpmeet to man, in house and home alone* (*AM*; 442, my emphasis).

That the narrator is also conscious of the reforming potential of religion, and that he sees a political motivation behind the desire to keep people from any independent access to the holy scriptures is made clear by the intrusive narrator: '[T]he gospel may very easily be read as a political document; not for nothing did the medieval church fight so long to keep it out of the *vulgar* tongues of Europe.' (*AM*; 391, my emphasis)

That such a political motivation to rule out certain arguments and opinions can be attributed as well to Ayscough, is made clear by the fact that his

refusal of the Shaker doctrine, which for him rests upon a rationalist argument, is actually inspired by his desire to uphold the current social order: 'Those are such no *thinking man* could countenance, for they place the judgement of a person's worth not upon his condition but upon himself; not on birth, but on the mere fact of being.' (*AM;* 447 f., my emphasis)

As the novel puts it at the example of Ayscough, Rationalism and Positivism have long been used to maintain the *status quo* of any given society. Consequently, the motivation to use these metanarratives has been that of maintaining a given social order, instead of trying to improve society for those who had lived on its dark side. Against this, the narrator stresses the importance that dissent has always played in the abolition of old structures:

> But in essence [dissent] is an eternal biological or evolutionary mechanism, not something that was needed once, merely to meet the chance of an earlier society, when religious belief was the great metaphor, and would-be conforming matrix, for many things beside religion. It is needed always, and in our own age more than ever before. (*AM*; 459)

The above commentary also warns the contemporary reader simply to assume that our own century has overcome the fundamental flaws of 18th century society. Any such position would consciously or unconsciously defend and justify the *status quo* of our own societies. Against this, the narrator maintains that while '[i]n so much else we have developed immeasurably from the eighteenth century; with their central plain question - what morality justifies the flagrant injustice and inequality of human society? - we have not progressed one inch.' (*AM*; 459).

While the novel allows for identification with the metanarratives and procedures of Ayscough, it also shows us that those were being used to maintain the given social order, and those who wanted to maintain it actually had very material interests in it. The novel also warns us not to assume lightly that our own 20th/21st century has abolished the basic inconveniences of the 18th century. I take this to be one of the basic meanings that *A Maggot* has as a novel. As in most of Fowles' other work, other meanings have been identified, which will be discussed in the following section.

5. 2. 6. The Ambiguity of Meaning

What are we to make of the various clues as far as the disappearance of Bartholomew and Rebecca's new-found religious doctrine are concerned? Much here depends on how much sympathy we as readers generate for Ayscough and his procedures to find out the truth. As we have seen, both his methods as well as his preconceptions and prejudices are invoked as well as undermined. Depending on our relationship to these, two categories of interpretations for this novel can be constructed:

First, the **mystico-religious** interpretation, which is characterised by a fundamental distrust of Ayscough's positivist procedures, which would hold that the two forms of truth are at least equally justified as far as their explanatory function is concerned. In this camp, we find Acheson's interpretation of *A Maggot:*

> [I]t seems apparent to the reader (...) that she has been the goal of a mission undertaken by his Lordship, a mission whose purpose is to enable a reformed sinner and a man of kind heart but of limited abilities to serve as father and mother to Ann Lee, one of the founding members of the Shakers. (Acheson 1998: 84)

> [Ayscough's] conservatism and fear of unbridled religious emotion make him more sceptical of Rebecca's experience of Stonehenge, and later of June Eternal, than a sophisticated twentieth-century reader might be. (*ibid.*)

For Acheson, Rebecca's truth is *at least as* important as Ayscough's positivism.

Second, there is a **rationalist** interpretation advocated by the narrator of the events himself. I have called it rationalist because it allots more importance to the epistemological scepticism and reservations that we might justifiably have concerning Rebecca's testimony. Here, the possibility that Rebecca has invented the events reported is explicitly endorsed. After all, if she has told Jones what she thought he would believe, why shouldn't she tell Ayscough what frustrates any further desire on his part to continue the investigation? It is *because* Ayscough cannot consistently apply the standards of rationalism that this interpretative possibility arises in the first place, and this in turn is due to the fact that Ayscough is living in an age where the belief in magical powers

is not totally extinguished, not even in the educated classes.

> Ayscough is left, after this exchange, in a dilemma, though he conceals it. A modern person would not have had a shadow of doubt that Rebecca was lying, or at least inventing. Gods, except for an occasional Virgin Mary to illiterate Mediterranean peasants, no longer appear. (...) Yet his England, even his class of it, was still very far from our certainties. (*AM*; 414 f.)

The first half of the mystico-religious interpretation is also discredited by the narrator:

> Readers who know something of what that Manchester baby was to become in the real world will not need telling how little this is a historical novel. I believe her actual birth was two months before my story begins, on 29 February 1736. I know nothing in reality of her mother. (*AM*; 455)

We have to bear in mind here that the last quotation is to be found in the ‘Epilogue' of the novel, which - in contrast to the 'Prologue' is *not* signed with 'John Fowles'. Therefore, the above interpretation, which contradicts what Acheson has had to say, might yet be another intrusion of the narrator rather than the author.

The interpretation of Acheson could be resurrected if we subscribe to the view that even in our own 20th/21st century, we have so swallowed the meta-narrative of Rationalism, that it exerts a function similar to the *simulacrum* of Baudrillard: if something is not presented in a rationalist manner, we won't be inclined to accept it. Personally, I think that such a claim is a little far-fetched. For all the merit of the Baudrillardian concept, I think that rational criteria can help us identify where the real is only simulated. To adopt the pose of rationality in order to convince somebody, this was maybe true in the age of Ayscough, where verbosity could be mistaken for rationality. Writing at a time where the Second Gulf War is about to complete its first weak, I think that the media-manipulated notion of an only alleged empiricism (we like to mistake for empirical facts what CNN or BBC tell us has happened in the Middle East) is far more dangerous, as well as symptomatic of what Baudrillard wanted to indicate by the concept of the *simulacrum*. Consequently, I think that Acheson's own reservations as far as the above interpretations of his are concerned, are highly

pertinent:

> In the reminder of the novel, Fowles toys with the reader's expectations of what is to come: it is only in the epilogue that he reveals that Ann Lee's date of birth was too early for her mother and her father to have been Rebecca Lee and Dick Thurlow, his two fictional characters. This is our last reminder that his novel is a 'maggot', rather than a work of fiction that adheres faithfully to established historical fact.
> (Acheson 1998: 85)

Nevertheless, it seems to be Fowles' claim that despite its very fictionality, *A Maggot* can provide us with some useful information about a past age which we might not find in official history books. The narrative modes, Fowles argues, often let us evaluate relationships and circumstances than would a list of statistics. Since Fowles counts on the intuitive acceptance of this claim by the reader, the claim is as much a meta-narrative as is the counter-claim that only hard facts and numbers matter.

> [I prefer] the rather old-fashioned narrative historians of the past, with all their prejudices and idiosyncrasies, to the highly scientific historiographical studies that proliferate in the modern academy. I'm not saying that sort of thing doesn't ever produce useful results, but I don't get much pleasure or edification from a long list of graphs or statistics. For me, history is a form of literature, or should be, and good historians are in many ways closer to the novelist than other kinds of writers.
> (Fowles in an interview with R. Foulke, quoted in Acheson 1998; 78)

Because *A Maggot* makes use of both meta-narratives (the depositions of the witnesses and the extracts of the *G.M.* representing positivist evidence; the narrative passages with their intrusive author representing the more story-telling modes; the Positivism of the deposition is shattered by Rebecca's 'truth') it is paradigmatic in its postmodernist mixture of complicity and critique.

6. The Ebony Tower

6. 1. The Ebony Tower

The first story of the collection *The Ebony Tower* is about the encounter of the painter/art journalist David Williams and the much older Henry Breasley, a painter who has been a contemporary of Picasso and Miró. Williams is supposed to write the introduction for a book about Breasley and pays him a visit in Coetminais, a kind of 'lost domain' in which Breasley had settled after long years in Paris. While Breasley's extravagant way of life is depicted at the surface level of the story, it is clear that there are two themes of central importance. First, the story is glistening with existentialist overtones, as is so much of Fowles' fiction: at the end of the story, Williams has to decide between surrendering to the temptation to sleep with Breasley's muse Diana, and staying true to his wife Beth.

While there is a sharp contrast in the depiction of the central characters Breasley and Williams (the first being characterised as existentially authentic, egoist, fallible, acting upon his impulses and out of necessity rather than by rational deliberation; the second probably too much influenced by the ideal of social conformity), a unified interpretation of the story along existentialist lines is being undermined here, as becomes manifest in William's staying true to his wife (*ET*; 103 ff) - even though this decision is at the same time a symbol of his lack of authenticity. As Huffaker has noted, we may interpret this staying true, which is not motivated by rational divination, but rather by the simple fact that Diana rejects him, as being in keeping with Breasley's demand not to deny the 'human fact', of treating one's fellows as human beings:

> David is brought up sharply against his own human fact, and despite this temporary inability to extricate his life from his art, decency need not make him a failure. Old Breasley's intemperate life has left him a somewhat pathetic figure, tongue-tied and fearful of both extremes: the Ebony Tower's sterility and romanticism's potential inhumanity. Although David thinks himself cowardly, his sexual hesitation had grown out of respect for his marriage - another *human fact* (Huffaker 1980; 123).

In contrast to Fowles' other novels, existentially authentic behaviour does not necessarily entail putting oneself in opposition to social convention. While it is feasible to accept Huffaker's view, much depends on the fact whether or not

we accept David's decision as being motivated by his respect for marriage. The alternative interpretation would be to see his sexual restraint as a fatalist surrendering to the fact that Diana has closed the door of her bedroom (*ET*; 102). Because existentialist behaviour still is a prominent theme in all of the stories in *The Ebony Tower*, I do not think that it '(...) contains the first signs of Fowles' waning interest in existentialism (...)' (Acheson 1998; 48), but rather that it talks about existentialist behaviour in a less unified way. While existentialism is being idealised by the living force of Breasley's 'arguments' and by Williams' sense of failure at the end of the story, Breasley's vitalist philosophy of art is undermined by his own inconsistencies (see the discussion about their respective philosophies of art for these inconsistencies). Consequently, both existentialism and Breasley's vitalist philosophy of art (and their respective counterparts!) are both subverted and invoked - a strategy that resembles the 'double coding' that Hutcheon has identified as one of the hallmarks of postmodernism.

As will be clear from the above paragraph, the second important theme in 'The Ebony Tower' is the two protagonist's differing views on the philosophy of art. Breasley 'deconstructs' Williams' abstract painting as a wrong method that betrays a fundamental fear of the most important characeristics of life as such. As a representative of modernist painting and abstracionism, Williams is attacked in sometimes very rude manners by Breasley, who cannot really be considered as a representationalist painter (even if we, as readers, have never seen any of his pictures; for an excellent discussion of what Breasley's paintings must look like, see Horlacher 1998). While the general impression is that the story favours the vitalistic approach of Breasley, it is not so easy to determine which side the bread is buttered.

6. 1. 1. Intertextuality

Like many of Fowles' other texts, 'The Ebony Tower' is set in a landscape at some distance from urban life, and thus links intuitively to Fowles' novel *The Magus*. In both novels, it is the 'domaine perdu' which sets the appropriate setting

for the protagonist to develop his* authenticity. As in *The Magus*, this lost domain is possibly adventurous, and presents the protagonist with riddles and dangers he has to try and overcome in order to learn: the closed gate that Williams encounters upon arriving (*ET*; 9) is both a symbol of the dangers that await him and of his own lack of self-awareness that he has to overcome in much of the same way that he has to make his way into the domain: 'Old Breasley's loose gate, like Conchis' broken fence, suggests that awareness is more accessible to the hero than it seems.' (Huffaker 1980; 119)

As Nicholas in *The Magus* is presented with two attractive young women (one of whom is sexually more attractive than the other), so is Williams. In both texts, there is an elderly, magus-like figure (Conchis and Breasley respectively) who controls the two women and helps the protagonist on his way to greater existential authenticity. And in both texts, the end is open in the sense that we as readers do not really know whether or not this help has been fruitful.

While the link between the two texts is thus strengthened, it is also undermined by a variety of strategies. The perhaps most obvious of those strategies is a self-referential one: Fowles mentions *The Magus* directly: 'He could read the title of the Freak's book: *The Magus*. He guessed at astrology, she would be into all that nonsense.' (*ET*; 64) While classified as 'nonsense' on the surface level of the text, *The Magus* does play a certain role, if only as a background for an existentialist interpretation; the text thus stands in a relationship of complicity and critique to one of its most prominent intertexts, Fowles' own *The Magus*..

A similar role is asserted to the second obvious intertext, *Eliduc* (Marie de France's medieval tale the translation of which forms the second contribution to *The Ebony Tower*). While the tale of crossed love could be highly pertinent to David and his present dilemma of choosing between marital fidelity and following his sexual instincts, as well as in the existentialist outlook of the tale, its role is at least questioned by the short and off-hand manner in which Breasley introduces it.:

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* Significantly, most of Fowles' protagonists are men.

> 'Damn good tale. Read it several times. What's the old Swiss bamboozler's name. Jung, yes? His sort of stuff. Archetypal and all that.' (...) He began to tell its story. But consciously or unconsciously his distinctly shorthand manner of narration was more reminiscent of a Noel Coward farce than a noble medieval tale of crossed love, and once or twice David had to bite his lips.(*ET;* 58)

But the real significance of the story *Eliduc* only becomes apparent when we compare one of the central metaphors that appear in both stories, though in a slightly different form. Both stories - near their respective ends, use the imagery of a dead weasel. While Williams runs over a weasel with his car when leaving Coetminais, in *Eliduc*, the weasel is restored to life by the fact that one of his mates places a flower in his dead companion's mouth (*ET*; 139). Another constitutive difference has to be taken into consideration here: while Williams does not follow his urge to sleep with Diana, the knight Eliduc stays true to his love for a woman who is not his wife. In existential terms, we might be tempted to infer that Eliduc is behaving more authentically than Williams does, and to see the surviving weasel as a symbol of staying true to oneself. This interpretation is supported by the profound sense of inauthenticity that Williams feels at the end of 'The Ebony Tower', but it might as well be questioned in light of the interpretation by Huffaker quoted above. Personally, I think that this interpretation by Huffaker is rendered less likely by the interaction of the weasel metaphor in the two texts, but - strictly speaking - there is no one who compels us to read one story in the light of the other. There is, still, some appeal to Huffaker's interpretation that the simple fact that David stays true to his wife does not imply existential inauthenticity. Once again, it is by no means absolutely clear which of these interpretations is to be preferred, and a lot depends to whether the reader is willing to see the parallel metaphor in both stories. Thus it is exemplified how certain preconceptions of the possible recipients can influence the interpretation of a text - and one of the implications most certainly is that there is no one right interpretation to texts as complex as the present one.

Besides those literary intertexts, intertextuality is thematized in a rather different way in this story: such as generations of literary critics have tried to pin the influences of almost every writer that has been written about, David Williams tries to find out those influences that figure prominently in the paintings of Breasley. Judging by the amount of discussion and thought that he employs to sort out these influences, it must be one of the points he is still unclear about as far as his introduction to the work of Breasley is concerned. While the paintings of Breasley are purely fictional products, their possible 'influences' are paintings that figure promptly in any list of the world's most important works of art: Uccello's *Night Hunt* (*ET*; 23) is discussed at some length, as are the works of painters such as Dix, Miró, Picasso, Braque and countless others. As do literary intertexts, these paintings question the concept of artistic originality, which is a fundamental subject in the respective views of art entertained by Williams and Breasley. Apart from the existential 'message', the conflicting metanarratives of Williams and Breasley are perhaps the major theme of the story *The Ebony Tower*, and deserve a separate section here.

6. 1. 2. Metanarratives: Representational vs. Non-Representational Art

Henry Breasley's position as far as 'modern' art is concerned is nicely summed up by his comment on a still life painting by Miró allegedly done in 1915:

> They had stopped before the little flower painting David had tentatively ascribed to Matisse. David shook his head.
> "Painted rubbish ever since." (...) "Miró. Done in 1915."
> "Good God."
> "Sad."
> (*ET*; 32)

In the early twentieth century, Miró was still painting representational, and Breasley's evaluation makes it clear from the start that he adheres to representational art and thinks abstract, or non-representational art a failure. Williams, on the other hand, is a non-representational painter himself, and fears that Breasley will disagree violently with him. Unsurprisingly, and as soon as Breasley has had more than enough wine, the differences of the two painters' approaches are

being discussed in an almost violent manner.

For Breasley, non-representational art is a failure because it denies the human fact, has no connection to life. While Williams tries to react to Breasley's condemnation by arguing rationally for the principles of non-representational art, it is clear from the outset that no rational arguments whatsoever will convince the old man to give up his fundamental convictions. Other than creating the image of an old rogue, Breasley's violently emotional reactions serve to bring home his point that the principles of the kind of art an artist is engaging in are not to be separated from the sort of life he is leading:

> 'But if philosophy needs logic? If applied mathematics needs the pure form? Surely there's a case for fundamentals in art, too?'
> 'Cock. Not fundamentals. Fundaments.' He nodded at the girl beside him. 'Pair of tits and a cunt. All that goes with them. That's reality. Not your piddling little theorems and pansy colours. I know what you people are after, Williams.'
> Once again the Mouse interpreted, in an absolutely neutral voice.
> 'You're afraid of the human body.'
> 'Perhaps simply more interested in the mind than the genitals.'
> 'God help your bloody wife then.' (*ET*; 45)

From a rational point of view, it seems at first as if Williams somehow had the better arguments (*ET*; 46 f.), but this assumption is soon called into question because Breasley - and this is obvious at once to Williams as well - shows an instinctive mastery of line, and Williams simply cannot help being impressed by his paintings even if they show some technical flaws - in the words of Diana: "'You've spent three years getting all the right attitudes to painting. Knowing even less what you're doing at the end than you did at the beginning. Then you meet this ridiculous old ragbag of all the wrong attitudes. And he's there. All your own clever little triumphs and progresses are suddenly cut down to scale.'" (*ET*; 65)

The disagreement of the two painters is not only one between representational and abstract art, it is also one over the motives that make you paint in the way you do. For Breasley, much of Williams' adherence to abstractionism is wrong simply because of the fact that it betrays an over-intellectual approach to art. From his perspective, it looks as if Williams were choosing his principles first, and then later paint in accordance with them. For

Breasley, painting is a necessity that he simply cannot help, he has to do it because of an inner urge to do it:

> 'My dear boy. Painted to paint. All my life. Not to give clever young buggers like you a chance to show off. Like shitting, yes? You ask why you do it. How you do it. You die of blocked arsehole. Don't care a fart in hell where my ideas come from. Never have. Let it happen. That's all. Couldn't even tell you how it starts. What half it means. Don't want to know.' He nodded back at the Braque. 'Old George had a phrase. *Trop de racine*. Yes? Too much root. Origin. Past. Not the flower. The now. Thing on the wall. *Faut couper la racine*. Cut the root off. He used to say that.' (*ET*; 79)

Too much theorizing is thus seen by Breasley to be more of a danger than to be of any use in the production of viable works of art. It is here that it becomes clear that what is at stake is not only representational against non-representational art, but also modernism vs. romanticism**.

In almost all forms of art, one of the distinguishing features of modernism is that it talks about, as well as questions, its own methods and principles of production. Williams' search for possible influences in the works of Breasley (as well as his consciousness of various influences in his own work) show him to be a modernist. For Breasley, by contrast, the thinking about production principles is inherently dangerous, because it stifles the vital impulse that for him is a mark of quality. In contrast to Williams, who tries to combine the life of an artist with the comparatively less riskier life of an art critic, Breasley believes that creation and criticism should be firmly separated: '"That's all. Just paint. That's my advice. Leave the clever talk to the poor sods who can't."' (*ET*; 80)

But while his overall position comes out quite clearly in this quote, there are also moments at which Breasley shatters his credo. While his obstinacy to talk about possible influences (he sometimes professes not to know painters that even an amateur would have heard of) might be perfectly comprehensible in the light of the above statement, we might question how serious he is, because David learns from Diana that Breasley actually does know a lot more about the history of art than he at first is willing to admit.

**Huffaker (1980) identifies Breasley as a romanticist painter; a claim for which there can be no evidence, since not even Fowles has seen a picture by Breasley. For a more convincing discussion of what Breasley's paintings might look like, see Horlacher (1998).

There is, finally, the correlation of the story's meta-artistic discourse to its quasi-existentialist perspective. Just as Williams has missed the opportunity to produce really authentic paintings, he misses the existential chance presented to him at the end of the story: 'In doing so [i.e. returning to his family in spite of leaving his wife for Diana] he misses the 'existential chance' (...) of achieving authenticity by leaving his family to start a new life with Diana' (Acheson 1988; 50). There are two areas of conflict between the two men, then: the first is the conflict of representational versus non-representational art, the second that of a rationalist versus a vitalist approach to life. These conflicts are voiced in the two painters' discussions about certain paintings for example.

But the role of paintings in the story 'The Ebony Tower' is not limited to illustrate the areas of conflict, they may also serve to question the very interpretation I have just proposed. As Horlacher (1998) has made clear in his excellent analysis of the role of the different paintings in 'The Ebony Tower', while we may be induced to swallow the vitalist view of life and art entertained and promoted by Breasley, there are also reasons to question it. One of those reasons is the simple fact that despite his violent rejection of abstract painting, Breasley is able to live well-off in Coetminais because he had sold a painting by Braque (Horlacher 1998; 158).

The other reason is one that is voiced more or less indirectly on the meta-level. While we might subscribe to a 'pro-vitalist' interpretation of the story, its own form may make us question this interpretation again. If we accept Breasley's view on art, it is strange (to say the least) that the story as such does not live up to the ideals proposed by that approach. As Horlacher has pointed out, while the story as such warrants a vitalist interpretation, it is culturally overdetermined itself (Horlacher 1998; III, 5), as we might see by noticing the fact that a lot of the discourse of the two painters is only intelligible to someone with more than a basic knowledge in the history of painting.

The critique of representation (or what it is about) thus mainly occurs on the level of discourse, most notably that of the two painters. The vitalist interpretation given new weight on the level of content, though. In his dealings

with Diana, David is sharply made aware of the fact that our means of representation sometimes may not suffice to communicate what we want to say: '[W]ords were swiftly becoming unnecessary; were becoming, however frank or sympathetic, not what the situation asked.' (*ET*; 93) Once again, we find an attitude similar to the one that Hutcheon characterized as a 'double bind': while the story is very specific about the inadequacy of representational media (and especially the written word), this message is voiced in a story, and thus depends on words and intersubjective communicability (see also Horlacher 1998; 224).

6. 2. Eliduc

A lot of what can be said about the intertextual dimension of the story 'Eliduc' has already been said when discussing its interaction with 'The Ebony Tower' above. A medieval tale of crossed love in a fairly 'standard' medieval setting (at least as far as contemporary notions about what medievalism can mean are concerned), 'Eliduc' is once again a story with a quite clear existential outlook. The simple fact that in spite of his promise to his wife, Eliduc stays true to his love for Guilliadun, already indicates his authenticity, which is underlined by the fact that his decision is one that is contrary to all the supposed social values of his time (what Eliduc commits in terms of religion is adultery, which is only rendered sacrosanct by the fact that his wife takes the veil). So much for easy interpretations.

Where the story differs from our standard notions of medieval literature (other than the fact that existential philosophy had not yet been invented) is in the way it allots good and evil to its central characters. While we would expect a rather straightforward allotment of good to the morally virtues, as well as evil to those who - finally - deserve it, the story is much more realistic. Despite the fundamental goodness of all the three central characters, it is simply by the necessity of coping with the facts of life (such as for example, Eliduc's falling in love with Guilliadun) that the interests of a person may be thwarted and this happens to all of them: Eliduc has to fear losing not only Guilliadun but his wife as well, Guildeluec has to leave her husband, and Guilliadun is threatened with imminent death. Although all three of them try to behave in a way which would not

hurt other persons, it is almost inevitable that they hurt others if they want to stay true to themselves as well (this is most true for Eliduc, but it could be shown for the other two central characters, too). Thus, one of the fundamental elements of the chivalric tale - its unidirectional allotment of good and evil in a highly constructed world- is undermined. Perhaps this is what is meant by Huffaker when he uses the term 'pretensions of the chivalric style' in an otherwise not really helpful comment:

> But Hitler, whose romantic ghost we flee, could icily describe genocide with the abstraction 'final solution' and *stylize* this terror away from reality - quite as the proponents of chivalry, in pursuit of order, could *stylize* away their inconsistencies. In her own twelfth century, Marie de France saw through the pretences of the chivalric style - just as Fowles, in his own twentieth century, sees through the pretences of abstraction. (Huffaker 1980; 118)

Since 'Eliduc' is not an original story by Fowles, but a translation, it is hardly surprising that the otherwise prominent and questioning approach towards the subject of representationality is missing here: there is no question that the facts narrated in the story really are facts for the central characters - and not illusions set up by some medieval equivalent of a Conchis, for example. The critique of representationality is here rather transported to another level, and is not so much concerned with the question of representation of facts within the story, but rather with the presentation of the story to the readers. This is why Fowles has decided to write a 'Personal Note', in which he explains that the

> (...) *Lais* were not meant to be read in silence - or in prose. In the original they are rhyming octosyllabic couplets, and they were to be performed, sung and mimed, probably to a loose melody, or to variety of them, and perhaps in places spoken almost conversationally against chords and arpeggios. (...) In the case of writers like Marie de France, to see only the printed text is rather like having to judge a film by the script alone. (*ET*; 121)

But it is not only this form of presentation that might question the authority of the text for a twentieth-century reader, it is also the difference of background knowledge of a twelfth-century or a twentieth-century recipient. As usual, Fowles is very aware of these differences and tries to gap the bridge by a few comments and footnotes (*ET*; 124 f.). As already said in the discussion of the novels *FLW* and *A Maggot*, these comments not only serve an explanatory

function that would structure the reception of the text along certain lines, they also highlight the textuality of the text in the full knowledge that we can only know something about past worlds through texts - thus exemplifying one of Hutcheon's fundamental 'paradoxes of postmodernism'.

Another postmodern element of the present story is its strong intertextual importance to virtually all of Fowles' texts. I have already alluded to the parallel weasel metaphor that links 'Eliduc' to 'The Ebony Tower'. Another important parallel that Fowles' speaks about is the fact that 'Eliduc' - like Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* - has been one of those texts that have deeply influenced him as a writer on his own. As all intertexts in part help to question the notion of authorial originality, we may wonder here how much all of Fowles' fiction owes to 'Eliduc', since it is here - as well as in *Le Grand Meaulnes* - that we find a good deal of the constitutive elements of much of his fiction: the theme of the lost domain, a strong existential outlook combined with problems of morality, and a questioning of the then dominant metanarratives.

Writing about *Le Grand Meaulnes* and its relation to *The Magus*, Fowles mentions that 'young thesis-writers' cannot see significant parallels and goes on:

> I must have severed the *umbilical chord* - the real connection requires such a metaphor - much more neatly than I supposed at the time; or perhaps modern academic criticism is blind to relationships that are far more emotional than structural.
> (*ET*; 118, my emphasis)

The metaphor 'umbilical chord' used here gets us back to 'The Ebony Tower', since severing the umbilical, or cutting out the roots, is Breasley's advice to the younger painter Williams. Consequently, we find an artistic attitude that does two things at a time: we are reminded of the fact that there is probably no artist who has not been influenced by other artists, but we also learn something about the necessity of cutting oneself off of these influences to develop a viable form of art. By inference, 'A Personal Note' is also a pointer back to the aesthetic discussion between Breasley and Williams, and we learn where Fowles' sympathies lie.

6. 3. Poor Koko

'Poor Koko' is a crime story at the surface. A literary critic writing a book about the poet Thomas Love Peacock in a countryside house of his friends is surprised by the arrival of a burglar. Being too fearful to set up any attempt of resistance, the burglar and he engage in an apparently rational discussion which at first creates the impression that the central character might be spared brutality. But at the end, the burglar makes him watch how he slowly burns his manuscript and annotations (the result of a couple of years' work).

The story exemplifies once again some of the key tenets of Fowles' fiction: the problem of knowing what has happened in the past, as well as the problem of correctly representing it to others; the critique of different metanarratives, here mostly Marxism, conservatism, and rationalism; and the question of what it can mean to behave and decide authentically in existential terms.

6. 3.1. The Critique of Metanarratives

From the beginning, the first-person-narrator of the present story is characterised as an intellectual, a rather bookish sort of person who has lost contact to 'real life': '(...) nor can I deny that books, writing them, reading, reviewing, helping to get them into print - have been my life rather more than life itself.' (*ET*; 147) Living rather in a world of rational probabilities, he is at first incredulous of the fact that the house he happens to be in should be the object of a burglary: 'I told myself I had been dreaming, that what had seemed to shatter must have done so in my nocturnal unconscious, not in external reality.' (*ET*; 145) The same is still true when he becomes aware that there really is a burglar in the house. With respect to his small physical powers and his myopic eye-sight, he resolves not to take action and prefers to wait and see whether he cannot get out of the situation unharmed.

When he is found by the burglar, he tries to involve him in a rational discussion with the possible aim of convincing him that what he is doing is actually very much beneath his intelligence. Here two fundamental metanarratives clash,

viz. Marxism and a strong belief in personal property. On the surface level, much of what is said in the discussion by the writer (whose name is never mentioned), seems to have the objective of convincing the burglar of the futility of his undertaking and to induce him to adopt a more rational attitude. But the surface sympathy that is apparent in these arguments is soon shown to be but a pose:

> No one detests class snobbery more sincerely than I do and that the young of today have thrown out so many of the old shibboleths does not disturb me in the least. I wish merely 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 f.)

Likewise, the reader soon becomes aware that not all the supposedly rational explanations the writer offers for his inaction are only rationally motivated. In keeping with the thesis of the politics of representation, purely selfish motives may hide underneath the rational mask: 'I must confess, too, in retrospect, to a purely selfish motive. It was not my property that was being stolen.' (*ET*; 150). This combines to a picture that depicts the writer not as someone who behaves like he does because of his inner urges and desires, but rather tries to behave in a way such as not to incur any possible risk: 'I had been in bed with someone else's wife (...) but the husband was safely in North Africa during the whole of our brief liaison.' (*ET*; 146)

The professed Marxism of the burglar does not fare much better when critically analysed. This is mainly due to the one-sided nature of his arguments, formulated in an over-clichéd style which gives the impression of only trying to use the right Marxist as well as lower social strata key terms: '"Way I see it, my house had burglars in since the day I was born. You with me? The system, right? You know what Marx said? The poor can't steal from the rich. The rich can only rob the poor."' (*ET*; 157) But when we look at the critique of representation that hides beneath the surface of the descriptions offered by the first-person-narrator, it may well be that the cliché-like impression of the burglar the reader may have is only due to the unfair way in which he is actually portrayed.

6. 3. 2. The Critique of Representation

Throughout the story, it remains unclear whether or not the account of the crime which we have just been reading is really an exact depiction of the action that took place. Right from the very beginning of the story, the reader is constantly being reminded that he may doubt what he is reading. Some of the reasons for these doubts are quite straightforward: the first-person-narrator is very explicit about his 'atrocious eyesight' (*ET*; 146), and his glasses figure prominently in the story (he has to look for them before taking any action at all, they are tossed out of the window by the burglar, and found again later). It is already in this first part of the story that the first-person-narrator warns us that he isn't always as objective as befits a scientist: for example, he admits not being objective in one of his earlier works: 'Nor was my most successful pot-boiler, *The Dwarf in Literature*, quite the model of objective and erudite analysis it pretended to be.' (*ET*; 147) Despite these doubts, his assessment of the initial situation - as he sits in his bed trying to make sense of the various sounds the burglar is producing - is quite correct, and consequently an impression is created which allows the reader to develop confidence in his intellectual powers. But this ratiocentric pose soon collapses as we witness the futile attempts to convince the burglar to behave more rationally. Throughout the first part of the conversation of the first-person-narrator and the burglar, we might get the impression that their dialogue might eventually work towards an agreement, but this hope (by which the reader can identify with the first-person-narrator) is soon frustrated as we learn of the destruction of the manuscript (*ET*; 171 ff.).

The destruction of the manuscript without doubt constitutes the turning point of the story. While rationality has played an important part up to this point, it now seems to collapse in the face of an inexplicable act - an act the first-person-narrator has tried to avoid.

What is striking about the form of the story is the fact that - apart from the comments about the first-person-narrator's bad eyesight - the first part of it is written in a climate of representational *naiveté*, i.e. the reader is presented with the bare facts (visual to the literary naked eye) of the crime. Several poss-

ible explanations for the crime are being discussed (the burglar's Marxism as a motive, his possible alignment with the son of the owner of the house), but none of them can explain the atrocious act.

In the second part then, hypothetically written almost a year after, this representational *naiveté* is undermined, as possible explanations are being discussed. From the onset, it seems clear that by now, the first-person-narrator has developed a different, and more relaxed, attitude and is more given to exculpating the burglar as well as seeing his own faults and shortcomings. It is mainly in this second, epilogical, part of the story that problems of representational accuracy are thematized by the first-person-narrator himself (*ET*; 175 ff.). He admits, e.g., having exaggerated '(...)especially in the attempts to transcribe my persecutor's dialogue. He did not perhaps employ the idiot argot of Black Power (...) quite as repetitively as I have described; and I may have misread some of his apparent feelings.' (*ET*; 177)

It is no coincidence that the second part of the story is given to possible interpretations of the crime. The factual descriptions of the first part disappear completely, as our first-person-narrator discusses different interpretations. It is quite striking that the explanation he finally comes up with (that the attack on his work was motivated by the fact that the first-person-narrator - taken as a representative of a specific generation, class, and attitude - has failed to hand down the magic of the word to somebody from a completely different background, cf. *ET*; 181 ff.), is one which relies heavily on the representational content of the burglar's body language and his choice of words, as well as the first-person-narrator's shortcomings in interpreting them: 'It may not be too far-fetched to say that what I failed to hear ("Man, your trouble is you don't listen hard enough") was a tacit cry for help.' (*ET*; 181)

In general terms, the two parts of the story present the reader with two possible points of view. In the first part, the reader is presented with a representationally naive depiction of factual events which apparently don't make any sense at all, while the second part is given to the interpretation of these facts. Taken together, the two parts show that a point of view which reduces the phenomena of the outside world to either empirical data or logical connections

is unhelpful. What is needed moreover, is the constructive interpretative work. This is not only true of the first-person-narrator, but of the reader of this very story as well. The explanation offered at the end still leaves a lot of questions unanswered, and it is for the reader to decide whether or not he is convinced by the assumptions put forward by the first-person-narrator. Once again, the reader is asked to behave in much the way that a writer actually does.

6. 4. The Enigma

The theme of the reader being invited to behave writerly is taken up in the next story, 'The Enigma'. A number of other themes we are already familiar with are taken up as well, such as the critique of some metanarratives such as rationalism or logical positivism, and conservatism as a whole.

The story's plot centres around the disappearance of the MP Fielding, a successful lawyer. From the very beginning, it is clear, that this is no ordinary case of disappearance, there being neither a convincing motive nor the likelihood of a crime. As the policeman Jennings takes over the investigations, the reader soon learns that all the rational explanations that could be offered for Fielding's disappearance soon collapse. And as Jennings gets to know the girlfriend of Fielding's son Peter, Isobel, the pose of a detective-story taken up at the beginning collapses as well.

6. 4. 1. The Critique of Metanarratives

L. Raw, in an unpublished paper about the postmodern elements of this story (Raw 2000) mentions the collapse especially of the metanarratives of rationality and logicality as a definite mark of the postmodernist outlook of 'The Enigma', but unfortunately, his analysis stops at this point. He mentions rather in passing how the different rational explanation are being ruled out by the very fact that there is no empirical evidence to support them: questioning his wife and relatives offers no clue at all, and neither does the memory of the people who worked with, or for, him. It is significant that Jennings makes a list of all possible rational explanations later on (*ET*; 198 ff.) only to add *wild*

ones immediately afterwards. All this is to no avail. When Jennings interrogates the Isabel, the girl-friend of Fielding's son Peter, the reader learns that Fielding knew that Isabel wanted to be in the British Museum on the day that Fielding disappeared, but since she protests not having gone there, the hunch that he possibly wanted to meet her in private is frustrated as well.

In general, Raw's argument that one of the postmodernist features of this story is the collapse of rationality as one of the dominant metanarratives of the West, is quite right, but there are more postmodernist elements in this story which incorporate the collapse of these metanarratives. Some of these metanarratives are realized on the level of narrative technique, and will be discussed in that section.

6. 4. 2. Narrative Technique and the Metanarratives of Literature

Rationalism and Logical Positivism are not only two of the central metanarratives which are (mostly) unquestionably followed in police or detective work, they are also the historical context of a comparatively young literary genre: the detective novel/story. While its earlier forms are a direct embodiment of both Rationalism and Logical Positivism, it is already in literary Modernism that this focus is subdued. As Logical Positivism is being criticised, mythical elements gain more importance in the modernist detective story (cf. Bertens 1997). But while mythical elements serve an explanatory function in the modernist detective story, they are subdued as well in the postmodernist detective story. We might well ask what is left, then, for the postmodernist detective story? Bertens answers this question by characterising the postmodernist detective story as the *anti-detective story*, with the fundamental criterion that the original mystery is not explained, or at least not explained in a way expected by the reader (Bertens 1997; 196).

Similar criteria for the postmodernist detective story have been developped by other theorists , and these criteria may help us in working out the postmodernist elements of 'The Enigma'. One of the defining features of the postmodernist or anti-detective story is an early ending which does not create, or propagate, suspense, while the real ending explains nothing at all. In 'The Enigma', it is clear that there is

no early ending that has any explanatory power for the disappearance of Fielding, and the real ending does neither (despite the fact that there is a connection: if Fielding had not disappeared, Jennings would never have met Isobel). Another feature is that the solution to the original mystery is found not because of the workings of the detective, but by chance. Still another feature is the (already familiar) change of the "readerly" for the "writerly" attitude. These last two features are especially interesting when looking at the relationship that Jennings develops with Isobel. It is Isobel who convinces him to adopt a more writerly attitude. In this scheme of attitudes, it is striking that a readerly attitude would correspond to the role of detective as it has traditionally been conceived: the detective is the one who has to 'read' meaning into all the facts he is presented with. But in this story, there are no facts to go by, and virtually the only clue Jennings gets from Isobel is the fact that she mentioned wanting to go to the British Museum on the day that he finally disappeared - a clue that is not really important, since she didn't go there at all, but it nevertheless alludes to the possibility that Fielding had been sick of the life he was leading, of the roles he had to play for public decency (*ET*; 220 ff.). But even this seems to be a track that doesn't lead much further in the explanation of Fielding's disappearance.

So Isobel assumes a meta-fictional strategy by assuming that

> (...) '[s]omewhere there's someone writing us, we're not real. He or she decides who we are, what we do, all about us. (...) Are you with me?'
> 'By the skin of my teeth.'
> 'A story has to have an ending. You can't have a mystery without a solution. If you're the writer you have to think of something.'
> 'I've spent most of this last month - '
> 'Yes, but only in reality. It's the difference between I haven't many facts, so I can't decide anything - and I haven't many facts, but I've simply got to decide something.' (*ET*; 229)

In the course of their conversation on the merits of this theory, several literary techniques are being discussed and - eventually - discarded (like the *deus-ex-machina*-theory, *ET*; 229). Eventually, she brings Jennings to adopt a more writerly attitude as they discuss different possibilities. It is strange that within their conversation, both are definite about the sex of the writer of this particular story: "'So our writer would have to tear this ending up?" If he's got a better." "He has. And may I have another cigarette?"' (*ET*; 231) This suggests

the possibility that either Fowles or Jennings could be meant by the pronoun 'he' but it is also a mystery that the reader will not solve. The question of authorship is further complicated by the fact that Isobel herself has literary ambitions and is trying to write a novel. But then, isn't it unlikely that she'd refer to herself by the male pronoun?

The most 'plausible' theory that Isobel comes up with is the one that the central character of a story not yet written has decided to walk out. In a typically postmodernist outlook, the story alternates between two interpretations of this theory and the consequences this could have for the realism of it. While Jennings holds the traditional view that a detective story has to end with the mystery explained, Isobel thinks that if '"(...) our story disobeys the unreal literary rules, that might mean it's actually truer to life?"' (*ET*; 232)

We learn as well that there are two hours on the afternoon Fielding disappeared for which she hasn't got an alibi. She mocks Jennings about this possibility, and even comes very close to admitting having helped Fielding disappear:

> 'She'd be doing it out of the kindness of her heart. And not very much. Just fixing up somewhere for him to hide a few days, until he can make his own arrangements. And being the kind of person she is, once she'd decided it was the right thing to do, nothing, not even rather dishy young policemen who buy her cups of tea, would ever get the facts out of her.' (*ET*; 231)

The theory of the central character walking out is elaborated further, when Isobel explains the concept of 'being written by somebody else' as a metaphor for leading an inauthentic life, a life in which the decisions you make are by and large determined by social conventions, the acting according to specific roles, etc. Here, the theme of personal authenticity and living up to one's convictions is once again introduced, the interpretation being that Fielding went missing in order to flee from his ordinary, inauthentic way of life. It is certainly no coincidence that this interpretation is voiced in terms which we are already familiar with from other works of Fowles: '"Theologians talk about the *Deus absconditus* - the God who went missing? Without explaining why. That's why we've never forgotten him."' (*ET*; 235) What is subtly introduced here is the theme of the Godgame, a theme that figures prominently in Fowles' other novels.

In these other novels, the method of the Godgame is to plant some clues for the protagonists and then leave them to their own devices, to make them learn about their personal freedom. In the other novels, the role of the god or the magus is generally assumed by someone who already knows how to behave in an authentic way, in order to set an example to someone who is maybe beginning to realize that he behaves inauthentically. If we accept the Godgame-interpretation for the disappearance of Fielding, we have a different focus here, since Fielding would be assuming both roles at once.

But another interpretation is possible as well. We might see Fielding's disappearance as the one authentic act he has done in his life, and Jennings as the initiate who has to learn to live according to his convictions. This interpretation is especially convincing if we do not limit ourselves to seeing 'The Enigma' as a detective story, but as a love story - an interpretation which is warranted by the fact that the second part of the story (*ET*; 217-239) is as much about Fielding's disappearance as it is about Jennings and Isobel getting to know, and eventually falling in love with each other. That this interpretation is - to say the least - not positively being ruled out is clear due to the fact that the last paragraph explicitly solicits the interpretation along the lines of a love story that has personal authenticity as one of its central themes: 'The tender pragmatisms of flesh have poetries no enigma, human or divine, can diminish or demean - indeed, it can only cause them, and then walk out' (*ET*; 239).

To sum up, then, Fowles' 'The Enigma' is a postmodernist anti-detective story which invokes and critically undermines the elements of the traditional detective story. Its dominant metanarratives, Rationalism and Logical Positivism are especially under attack here, and it is mainly the non-availability of any empirical evidence which forces Jennings to rely on the psychological theories of Isobel - which are presented in a quite rationalist manner and thus criticise a potential one-sidedness of absolute empiricism. But we should also beware of taking too much confidence in the theory proposed by Isobel, because the reasons why Jennings believes it are mostly self-centred: first, he is rapidly falling in love with her; second, he is mentally predisposed to believe it since it is a theory in keeping with his initial contempt for Fielding (a contempt that is

voiced in terms very similar to a Baudrillardian characterisation of the *simulacrum*):

> He had grown not to like Fielding much, either; or that way of life. Just that one became brainwashed, lazy, one swallowed the Sunday colour-supplement view of values, the assumption's of one's seniors, one's profession, one forgot there are people with fresh minds and independence who see through all that and are not afraid ... (*ET*; 219)

On another level, 'The Enigma' is also a love story between two people one of whom still has to learn the lesson about personal authenticity. For Jennings, and despite the fact that it is Fielding who formally takes over the role of the *deus absconditus*, Isobel is the magus who puts him on the road towards greater personal authenticity. It is also her who mentions (if in passing) one of the story's central themes, which is seeing through the pretences of a life dominated and structured by career and public image - the metanarratives of our own post-industrial society. It is mainly this aspect that links the story with the other stories in this collection: 'The Ebony Tower' attacks the pretences of modernism in painting (as well as a couple of others), 'Eliduc' those of romantic chivalry, and 'Poor Koko' those of a literary, academic lifeless life. This brings us back both to Fowles own admission that the stories are variations and to Huffaker's comment (1980;118, cf. the quote above) that the stories are mainly about seeing through the pretences (or metanarratives, if you prefer) of a cultural or social period.

6. 5. The Cloud

Without a doubt, 'The Cloud' may be categorised as being one of the most difficult stories in the present collection, because the interpretative possibilities it offers are far more limited than those of the other stories. As a consequence, the reader (or at least myself) is often left without a clue as she goes through pages that describe an afternoon picnic involving eight persons, five adults and three children. From the very start, it takes effort on the part of the reader to figure out the relationships of these persons, but it soon becomes clear that all of them are English, probably enjoying a holiday in Bretagne, France. Amongst the five adults, there are two couples, Paul and Annabel (both from an intellectual background) with their children Candida and Emma, and television producer Peter with girlfriend Sally

and his son, as well as Annabel's sister Catherine. As in a film by David Lynch, what begins as a rather idyllic afternoon at the sea is soon transformed into a scenario of personal loss, deprivation, and eventually violence.

6. 5. 1. The Critique of Representation

The critique of representation is one of the central issues of this story, but it comes in a slightly different form than the reader is used to by way of reading the preceding ones. What begins as a rather idyllic picnic is soon overshadowed by the personal problems of each of the five adults, most notably Catherine. What is important here is the fact that these problems are not named directly, but mentioned in indirect ways. Only if the reader reads carefully will she be able to infer that Catherine's ex-husband committed suicide (*ET*; 260) and that her depressive mood is a direct result of this personal tragedy. In contrast to Paul and Annabel, who try to maintain the masks of respectability and politeness, Catherine takes a hostile attitude towards Peter and Sally. As the picnic draws towards an end, and taking advantage of the siesta that is held afterwards, Catherine not only emotionally, but physically distances herself from the others as she walks to a hidden place in the nearby woods, where she is first joined by Emma, to whom she tells the fairy-tale of Prince Florio and Princess Emma. As Emma joins the others, Catherine stays in her abode to be met by Peter, whom she lets make sex to her (her passive manner of enduring his intrusion validates this rather awkward description). As the day draws towards an end, Peter joins the others again, but Catherine decides to stay in her hiding place. All characters are worried about Catherine's state of mind, but when it comes to going home, they decide that it might not be useful to look for her any longer, presuming she might have gone home already. This reaction is to a great extent provoked by Peter and the false information he provides: 'Bel smiles. "You didn't see Kate by any chance?" He looks past her, searching. "No. Isn't she ... ?" "Never mind. She may have started home." She turns and calls down to the others. "Come on. Peter's back."' (*ET*; 293)

As far as the critique of representation is concerned, it will not be an exaggeration to say that Peter as a character is of central importance. We may see him as a symbol for the politics of representation as described by Hutcheon, be-

cause his lies about the whereabouts of Catherine are directly motivated by the fact that he does not want his girlfriend to realize that he had a (quasi)sexual encounter with Catherine. His girlfriend Sally is more aware of the meaning of certain signs, most obviously exemplified by her curiosity about the smell of Peter's sun-tan: '"Are you sure you didn't see her?" He gives her a sharp look. She stares at the path. She says, "You smell like she did this morning." He is amused and incredulous. "Darling. For God's sake."' (*ET*; 296)

Another instance that proves the fact that Peter is more concerned with upholding a certain picture of himself than he is in telling the truth is his exaggeration of the number and type of snakes that he encountered on his way through the cliff. Whereas the reader knows that he had only seen a small snake for a couple of seconds (rarely enough time to identify the type of snake), Peter almost immediately describes them in the plural: 'It would certainly be an adder when he got back to tell them.' (*ET*; 288) 'He tells her about the adders. They are safely plural now.' (*ET*; 293)

It is no coincidence that these remarks are being made by the partly omniscient narrator, and not by Peter himself, thus exemplifying the fact that it is not Peter, but rather the narrator, who is conscious of the Politics of Representation. This latter point has a special poignancy if we take into account the fact that much of the conversation between Peter and Catherine is devoted to a discussion of Barthes' book *Mythologies*, in which the Politics of Representation are being discussed. During the conversation, it is obvious that Peter is not really interested in the subject, and probably not able to understand Barthes' argument at all. Ironically, his behaviour often seems like an unconscious manifestation of those theories, as is attested, once again, by the narrator:

> She realizes, it is very simple, she hates him; although he is fortuitous, ignorable as such, he begins to earn his right to be an emblem, a hideous sign. For he is not testing - or teasing - Barthes and semiotics, but her. He means childish little male things like: why don't you smile at me, what have I done, please show respect when I watch my language because I know you don't like my language. (*ET*; 270)

It might be speculated whether or not Peter's unawareness about the mechanisms and politics of representation are due to him being a television producer;

but whether or not we subscribe to the claim that he might be so immersed in the medium that he doesn't realize its limitations and problems, it is obvious that Peter is a symbol for representative failure - as is also exemplified by his cliché-ridden use of superlatives - a use that comes close to complete meaninglessness: 'Peter, with his meaningless clichés (...) represents the mentality which has deprived language of its meaning' (Huffaker 1980; 130).

Although this analysis of Peter touches some important points, we had better guard ourselves against such a one-sided interpretation. While it is true that Peter's mentality is one that is prone to deprive language of its meaning, it is also true that Paul, and especially Catherine, are characterised as intellectual snobs. In the first place, it is Paul who questions the validity of Barthes' theory: 'Paul speaks from apparent sleep. "Until everything about meaning matters except meaning. 'Pass me the salt' becomes a pregnant sign-structure. And the poor bloody salt never gets passed."' (*ET*; 269)
It is important to note that, although formulated in a rather ironic way, Paul's argument has its point. But what really shatters a one-sided interpretation is the fact that Catherine is not only the intellectual superior within the group, but snobbishly so as well, as we can see in her answer to Peter's questioning of the validity of Barthes' theory:

> 'But I mean, you know ... if it's just picking up people's platitudes, it's just word-watching. Like bird-watching. No?'
> 'I presume even ornithology has its uses.'
> 'Hardly central though, is it?'
> 'It would be if the bird was the basis of human society. As communication happens to be.' (*ET*; 270)

Once again, we can see a distinctively postmodern element here: the double-coding that Hutcheon refers to, and which both subverts and asserts. Here, it is asserted that Peter is representationally naive, because he cannot see the possible motives that are reflected representations. Thus, Catherine's critique is in place, but what renders her ambiguous as a person is the fact that she herself is equally to blame. It is true that in contrast to Peter, she is aware of the underlying processes of representation, and this is why she uses intellectual arguments as weapons. She reproaches Peter with unconcealed

sarcasm for his naive arguments, but she does not take such a negative stance with Paul: 'Paul says, "The mountain bit started with the Romantics, surely." She runs a finger down Emma's hair. It began with Petrarch; but one must not know too much.' (*ET*; 268)

In summary, then, the problem of representation is presented slightly differently as in the other stories in this collection or the other novels of Fowles. Here, it is not so much that the individual characters experience that representation can be deceiving, and then learn that it can have its underlying politics. Rather, the politics of representation are being discussed (and explained to Peter), but as readers, we may voice a doubt whether or not the simple awareness of these politics is really a gain - at least Catherine's snobbism can make us wonder whether she is conscious of her own politics of representation, and whether this knowledge helps her in becoming a better human being herself.

6. 5. 2. Self-referential Writing, Intertextuality and the Relationship of Author and Reader

One of the hallmarks of both modernist and postmodernist literature is the questioning (if not the abolishment) of the distinction between reader and author. Already in 'The Enigma', we have seen that Fowles demands increased participation on behalf of his readers. In 'The Cloud', this demand for participation figures more prominently. It is difficult for the reader to determine what is happening at all in the story because of the fragmented way in which it is written. At times, it is difficult to determine who says what, and it is likewise difficult to find out the relationships between the main characters. One of the central characters of the story most certainly is Catherine, and much of the emotional atmosphere builds upon the knowledge that she has already been married, and that her husband committed suicide. All these facts are presented in a rather indirect manner in the first few pages of the story, and sometimes referred to later, but (more than in 'The Enigma', which is formally a detective story), the reader has to be a detective to sort all these information into a coherent picture.

It is significant in this context that while there exists a sort of a consensus on how to interpret the more famous ones of Fowles' novels among the critics, it

is - at best - difficult to define a unifying theme or interpretation for 'The Cloud'. There being no sign of personal growth or development, it seems difficult to analyse it in existential terms, and it is likewise difficult to say whether or not the critique of representation and the discussion of Barthes really constitute a central theme here. Much of this is due to the fact that the ending is ambiguous as well. We are simply not told whether Catherine has decided to follow in her late husband's footsteps (i.e. commit suicide), but we are invited to speculate about this possibility: 'And Catherine lies, composing and decomposed, writing and written, here and tomorrow in the deep grass of the other hidden place she has found.' (*ET*; 287) The uncertainty of what happened to Catherine is further augmented by the introduction of an element of mystery, here in form of a huge cloud, which links the story vaguely(!) to the other stories, in which the mysterious was exemplified by an animal.

In contrast to the other writers in the other stories, the text that Catherine produces is a fairy tale. It is at the hand of this fairy tale that a lot of what fiction really is about is presented to the reader. One of the main characteristics of fiction is its constructedness, and its dependence on the author. Catherine, though, exemplifies her doubts as far as the role of the author is concerned by the very fact that she lets Emma take her part in the development of the fairy tale, and thus blurs the distinction between author and recipient: "'How old was she?" "How old do you want her to be?"' (*ET*; 277) On another level, the metafictional discourse of Catherine and Emma clearly shows that 'truth' is not a criterion that is universally acknowledged as a mark for the quality of a text. Especially in fiction, it is implicitly argued, what is important is not so much the truth, but rather the way in which a story is told:

> 'Is it a true story?'
> 'Sort of true.'
> 'I don't mind if it isn't.' (*ET*; 275)
> Emma shakes her head firmly. She watches her aunt's face almost as if the prince and the princess as well as phonemes might come from her mouth. The process. One does not have to believe stories; only that they can be told. (*ET*; 278)

Here, some of the fundamental key tenets of postmodernist writing are neatly summed up: the constructedness of texts, their dependence not only to

the wishes and whims of writers, but readers as well, and - at least for fictional texts - the fact that truth alone can never be an adequate criterion for a fictional text. Another process of writing is mentioned as well that of re-writing, a post-modernist technique *par excellence*, because it combines the shattering of artistic originality while at the same time underlining it. In 'The Cloud', Emma practically rewrites the fairytale told by Catherine, and makes her own '(...) already revised version of it, which will end without ambiguity.' (*ET*; 295) On the one hand, Emma's version is not original, because inspired, conditioned by Catherine's, but on the other hand, it is original, because Emma herself must behave as an author to alter the end of the story. Thus, authorial originality is both inscribed and undermined.

But the fairy tale of Catherine does not only function as an example at the hand of which postmodernist theory about writing is exemplified; it also serves as an intertext for 'The Cloud' itself and as such problematises the relation of fiction and reality once more. It is easy to discern that both Catherine's fairy-tale as well as 'The Cloud' share an ambiguous ending in which the respective woman protagonist is left waiting for her prince, calling his name. Catherine's fairy-tale, although being a product of fiction alone, parallels the situation that can be described as 'reality' for the characters within the story. But on the next level, for us as readers, Fowles' 'The Cloud' has more or less the same status as the fairy-tale has for Emma. Consequently, we might feel invited to resolve the ambiguity of the story in much the same way as does Emma - an approach that is questioned by the fact that we as readers know already that Catherine's prince will never return. In this way, it is pointed out both, that a story is always a construct, as well as the fact that we cannot bend a story to our preferences only, since there are also inherent demands that preclude certain developments of the plot. A story is not only written by author and reader, but by itself as well.

6. 6. The Metafictional Development of *The Ebony Tower*

With the exception of 'Eliduc', the protagonists of all the stories in *The Ebony Tower* are writers. David Williams is writing an introduction for a book about Breasley, the literary scientist is writing about Peacock, Jennings is desperately trying to write a report about Fielding's disappearance, and Catherine (though I am unsure whether to call her a protagonist) is the author of a fairy tale.

It can hardly be a coincidence that the kinds of texts written by the respective protagonists tend to move from realistic and/or scientific description to fiction.

In 'The Ebony Tower', it is not only the pretences of modernism and abstractionism that are under permanent critique, but also the rationalist approach to a fundamentally vitalist form of art. In this light, part of Williams' failure is his wish to objectify. In 'Poor Koko' the pretences of a realist description are opposed to the inadequacy of making us understand the atrocious act of the young burglar. It becomes clear that the rationalist depicting only tells us half of the truth. In 'The Enigma', then, realist and rationalist description are pictured as total failures to explain anything about the disappearance of Fielding at all. Fiction, as proposed by Isobel, is characterised as one of the possible ways out of this dilemma. The most obvious metafictional point of the story seems to be its sustaining of the role of the characters in the development of the plot - as in *Mantissa*, the characters are allowed to behave contrary to the expectations of the author and thus shape the story to much the same degree as the author actually does. In 'The Cloud', finally, tells us more about the nature of fiction by being very specific about reader roles.

To sum up, we might say that while the inadequacy of realist and rationalist depictions is pointed out, fiction might supersede the limits of factual description, and sometimes is allotted more explanatory power than its rival (most notably in 'The Enigma'). As readers, we might question whether this explanatory power really gets us any further, since there is finally no unified criterion for such a claim.

With the stories in *ET*, Fowles introduces a new element into his fiction: he is writing about artists. These artists have to fight hard to attain personal authenticity such as the other characters in Fowles' earlier novels, as we can see at the examples of David Williams and, in the following section, of Daniel Martin. When this theme is linked with the critique of representation, a new and interesting question emerges: How does the writer's psychological condition influence and affect what he writes and in what way he writes?

7. Daniel Martin

7. 1. Introduction

Fowles' penultimate novel to date portrays a few days in the life of the protagonist Dan, a successful Hollywood playwright in his early fifties, an Englishman in self-chosen exile, profoundly dissatisfied with his job, which is one of the main reasons for his wish to depict his own life realistically. Suddenly, the news is spread that Anthony, a friend from fellow student days in Oxford who is now terminally ill, wants to see him one last time to attempt a reconciliation. In their student days, Anthony was engaged to Jane, Dan to her sister Nell, but on a trip to Italy, Dan and Jane had a one-time sexual encounter. Meanwhile, Dan's marriage with Nell has broken up, and his current girlfriend Jenny McNeill is more or less the age of his (and Nell's) daughter Caro. The reconciliation done, Anthony commits suicide, and Dan stays for a couple of days in England where he feels his love for Jane reawakening. He feels his relationship with Jenny to be inauthentic, a characterization that he deems correct as far as his own being a playwright is concerned, too. On his way towards greater existential authenticity, there are three 'tasks' that Dan has to fulfil: to regain the woman he truly(?) loves, to leave behind his shallow and inauthentic way of life as a playwright and to depict his own life realistically. Dan considers the autobiographical novel to be the right form for the last task, and the novel that we are reading tries to be a first step towards that goal. In depicting his life, Dan sets himself a high standard over accuracy: 'Whole sight, or all the rest is desolation.' (*DM*; 7)

7. 2. Narrative Technique

For Dan, the demand to be realistic is necessarily linked to the question of representation, because as a playwright, he is conscious of the distorting effects that some methods of representation have. This becomes clear most prominently when he uses his narrative power to be dishonest with Jenny (most notably when answering her letters, such as in chapters 26 and 33), or to justify his own behaviour and feelings to himself (chapter 28). From the outset, it is clear that this is a novel in which the reader is constantly being reminded of the Politics of Representation.

7. 2. 1. Who's the author?

When discussing 'whole sight', one of the first questions to pop up is 'Who is seeing?' In *Daniel Martin*, there are three points of view: third-person *total* and *selective omniscience*, first-person narrative and contributions from an outside observer who is emotionally very near to Dan, here in the form of letters he receives from Jenny, sometimes written in the rarely used second person singular. As far as the first to points of view are concerned, it strikes the reader that they are not as easily distinguishable as we would suppose them to be: while we might be tempted to conclude that we are reading an account of an outside observer because of the fact that we are reading a passage written in the third person, we are often at a loss as far as our guesses on who the narrator could be are concerned. This is not made any easier by the fact that the different points of view are sometimes used intermittently, and even within a single sentence: '*I* feel in *his* pocket and bring out a clasp-knife ... ', '*I* can't pretend that *he* hesitated ...' (*DM*; 16 and 145 - my emphasis). In contrast to *FLW*, for example, it is unclear whether the pronoun 'I' refers to Fowles or to the imaginary writer Dan, and in the latter case we'd have to suppose that Dan is drawing a sharp line between himself as an author/narrator and as a biographical person.

Finally, the question whether or not Dan is identical with Fowles has to remain unclear, because once again, we can identify a strategy that is best de-

scribed as 'double coding': '(...) though Martin is carefully distinguished from Fowles in a number of respects, he is also identified with him.' (Conradi 1982; 95) The identification of Fowles and Dan mainly rests on Jenny McNeill's proposition to write the novel from a fictional perspective. She has already thought about a possible pseudonym: 'S. Wolfe' - and it is surely not coincidental that this name is an anagram of the name 'Fowles'!

Narrative Technique is being thematized in a self-reflexive manner in *Daniel Martin*, because the novel is refers directly to the two narrative tenses: 'A novel is written, in the two past tenses: the present perfect of the writer's mind, the concluded past of fictional convention.' (*DM*; 256) According to this statement, we might suppose that a certain narrative tense corresponds to a certain narrative point of view, but this is simply not the case. Both the third and the first person are being used irrespective of the tense employed. Neither is there a clear connection between the narrative tense and the time narrated, as is clearly deducible from a scheme by Loveday (1985), who categorises the different chapters as follows:

main story: chapters 2, 5, 7, 10, 12-15, 17-20, 23-27, 29, 31-33, 35-46
childhood: chapter 8
adolescence: chapters 1, 30
Oxford: chapters 3, 6, 9
marriage: chapters 11, 14, 16, 22
purchase of Thorncombe: chapters 13, 29
(cf. Loveday 1985; 110)

Without a doubt, the chapters that Loveday subsumes under 'main story' are situated in the present (in relation to the moment of narration), but the employment of different narrative tenses does not correspond to this differentiation: the passages which depict 'present' scenes are often written in past tense, and those which describe Dan's childhood are sometimes written in present tense. There are two possible interpretations for this phenomenon. First, we could interpret such a procedure as a questioning of an hypothetical 'narrative imperative' according to which narrated time and narrative tense have to correspond; such an interpretation would clearly be a metafictional one, and perfectly in keeping with the numerous passages in *Daniel Martin* in which the methods of writing fiction are being discussed.

Personally, I favour the second interpretation, according to which the employment of tense is integrated into a play with points of view and narrative tenses which makes the reader question who is the author of the book at all.

This last question has a special poignancy if we remind ourselves of the fact that Dan is - at least as far as his communication with Jenny is concerned - a liar at times. While he is trying to live up to his ideal of 'whole sight', we might still question to what degree he is actually telling us the truth about his past life. The case of Jenny is a lot easier, since her contributions are downright self-interested and self-centred - and this becomes manifest on the level of narrative technique as early as in her first contribution, in which she first tries to write about a fictive character named S. Wolfe, but then isn't able to keep up the pretence and quickly addresses Dan in the second person which is in keeping with the letter-like quality of her narrative (cf. chapter 4, significantly entitled 'An Unbiased View').

7. 3. Metafiction

Before analysing the ways in which Dan's ideal of 'whole sight' is linked with the question of the media and in how far they are conducive or detrimental to its realization, I briefly want to draw a distinction concerning the use of the concept 'metafiction'. The metafictional qualities of this novel will be analysed in two not entirely separate, but principally distinguishable ways. On the first level, there is the analysis of metafictional comments within the novel. These are especially prominent, since Dan has so far been a script-writer, and thus comparisons between two forms of representation - film and novel - come quite naturally. By looking at these comments, we will see their connection with some of the above-mentioned narrative techniques. On the second level, there are those narrative strategies which make the reader think about the principles of, say, novel-writing without thematizing them theirselves.

7. 3. 1. Metafictional Statements/Metanarratives

It is small wonder that Dan with his background as a script-writer intent on writing a novel finds frequent occasions to comment on the respective qualities of the two media. The specifically postmodern turn of these comparisons comes out nicely if we see them in contradistinction to Dan's ideal of 'whole sight'.

First of all, it is obvious that Dan's experience with film scripts has been a far more extensive one. On the level of narrative technique (ignoring the question whether it is Dan or Fowles that's writing), this is shown by the fact that Dan frequently uses film terminology or film devices in his narrative ('Close shot', *DM,* 16; 'One last shot', *DM,* 405). The reason for this use of film terminology is, I believe, o show that Dan still thinks in images rather than in narratives. This links him with 'his' author Fowles, who in a number of interviews has admitted that a lot of his fiction originated in an image which he couldn't forget (cf. the analyses of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*). I won't further explore the problem whether the following analysis of the metanarratives about film and novel tell us something about Fowles rather than Dan - they are problematic enough without this further complication.

What is of more interest here are the conflicting ideals that Dan sees behind these forms of representation. Because his own ideal is that of 'whole sight', we learn at a number of occasions that one important reason for which Dan is willing to try a novel is his belief that he might be able to represent his life more accurately in a novel. This becomes especially obvious in his numerous talks with or about his acquaintance Barney Dillon, who is a symbol the decadence of the film and TV world - a world that views everything and everybody in terms of the capitalist concept of profit. This, unsurprisingly, is also one reason why Dan feels inauthentic: he has subjected his more artistic ambition to the pursuit of money, easy living, and a young girlfriend.

While Dan knows what he's talking about when it comes to the film and TV world, things are not as easy with the activity of novel-writing. Here, we find quite conflicting views, because Dan also holds the opposite view. Contrary to his initial appraisal of the novel as the ideal medium to fulfil his ideal of whole sight, he maintains that film is un-English because it leaves no possibility for hiding

oneself (one of the fundamental metaphors for being English - not only in this novel - is the bird that watches from a concealed point of view, e.g. a tree). From a logical point of view, the implication of this statement is that in a novel, you can hide a lot better:

> The film cannot be the medium of a culture all of whose surface appearances mislead, and which has made such a psychological art of escaping present, or camera, reality. (...) Since we (i.e. 'the English' - JP) are so careful only to reveal our true selves in private, the 'private' form of the read text must serve us better than the publicity of the seen spectacle. Furthermore the printed text allows an escape for its perpetrator. It is only the spoor, the trace of an animal that has passed and is now somewhere else in the forest; and even then, given the nature of language, a trace left far more in the reader's mind (another forest) than outside it, as in the true externally apprehended arts like a painting and music. (*DM*; 292 f.)

Once again, we have a doubly coded statement: on the one hand, it is asserted that the 'private' form of the text leaves more room to hide. Here, we might ask who is left more room to hide. The answer (by circumstantial evidence) is of course: the writer. Dan is fully conscious of the fact that as a writer, he can portray people according to his fancy - as he is willing to admit to Jenny: "'I know your game. We're all so much easier to live with when we're just notions in your past. I think you're the original male chauvinist pig." "All writers are. Even women ones."' (DM; 657)

On the other hand, and despite all his character flaws, adopting the point of view of a bird hiding in the trees might be more authentic for Dan simply because of the fact that he *is* English, after all. In existentialist terms, we are witnessing a progress here: while in his earlier life Dan has presumably fled from his Englishness by going to America and becoming a script-writer, he is now becoming aware that he can't simply cross out his Englishness without first analysing what it means and then trying to overcome those characteristics he doesn't like.

We may explore this link between metafictional comments and existentialist themes even further. If writing is an activity that relegates persons to the status of objects (as is maintained in the quote above), writing is also an exemplification of what Fowles elsewhere has called the "collector-mentality", a mentality that is characterized by the need to possess something or somebody in a materialistic sense. Dan exhibits traits of this mentality especially in his relation

with Jenny, and - in a conversation with his daughter Caro - even goes so far as to excuse his behaviour by pointing out that he is a writer: '"And why are all writers bad at relationships?" "Because we can always imagine better ones. And the imaginary ones grow much more satisfying than the real ones."' (*DM*; 286)

On the level of the whole novel, we once again find a mixture of complicity and critique as far as this analysis is concerned. While Dan is 'bad' in the sense of 'inauthentic' in his dealings with Jenny, there is reason to believe that in his attempts to have a relationship with Jane, he is gradually becoming more authentic and true - but since we don't know if or how this relationship will turn out, this reason is suspended.

7. 3. 2. Reader Involvement

Another form of the metafictional strategies within this novel are those which either directly direct the readers' attention to formal aspects of the very novel he is reading.

When asking Jenny about how he should write the novel he is planning to write, she simply answers: '"All you have to do is put down exactly what we've just said,"' (*DM*; 21), to which he replies: '"That's the last chapter. What I've become."' (*ibid.*) Now, in an autobiographical novel of the sort he's planning, the incorporation of real dialogue would certainly have its place, and actually the very words of their conversation do appear in the novel. Here, once again, we find an attitude that oscillates between complicity and critique: while Dan deems it appropriate to relegate these words to a later stage of his novel, they do appear in Fowles' novel at about the place Jenny suggests. Thus, the reader is invited to actively take her part in the discussion about the appropriate place for this conversation to occur. It can also be seen as an example of Fowles telling his hero something about the principles of novel-writing by the very fact that he rather puts his and Jenny's dialogue at the beginning (chapter 2).

Another way to direct the reader to think about the principles of novel-writing is one that we are already familiar with from other Fowles novels: the reader is addressed directly. Here, this addressing of the reader significantly

takes place at a moment when Dan is trying to explore some of the fictional alternatives he has in presenting the plot and characters of his (still unwritten) novel:

> The least thinking reader will have noted a third solution, but it had not occurred to the writer-to-be until this moment. (...)
> To hell with cultural fashion; to hell with élitist guilt; to hell with existentialist nausea; and above all, to hell with the imagined that does not say, not only in, but behind the images, the real.
> (*DM*; 431 f.)

By addressing the reader directly, Fowles invites her to explore the fictional possibilities that offer themselves on the basis of the already-written. The metafictionally obvious claim here is that being a novel-writer is also a matter of experience. This is the reason why a reader who thinks might actually give some advice to a writer trying his hand at his first novel. Thus, the power that the writer has by virtue of the fact that he can 'objectify' the characters of his novel (cf. the point made about the 'collector-mentality' above) is subdued. By virtue of their experience with novels, thinking readers are actually as important a part of the creative process of novel-writing as is the author himself (this point will come up again in the discussion of the intertextual elements in the novel).

7. 4. The Critique of Metanarratives

First of all, it should be made clear that this section makes use of the term 'metanarrative' in the sense of the definition given in 1. 1. 3., and commonly attributed to Lyotard. The concept of a metanarrative therefore denotes those arguments, reasoning, and justifications, which serve as the basis for the justification of other arguments, discourses etc. Some authors, such as e.g. Hutcheon (1989), have used the term 'doxa' instead of 'metanarratives', but the concept is coextensive. Probably the most prominent example in the history of Western thought is the metanarrative of rationality, which for a very long time has been the undoubted standard by which to judge the quality of a given discourse. A post-modernist attitude to, say, rationality would not be one that disputed the validity of rationality, but one that undermined or questioned it instead. It is here that Hutcheon differs from Lyotard, who openly values irrationality (cf. above).

The metanarratives that have structured Dan's life before he took the decision to write a novel come out quite clearly in the novel: economic success and a pleasurable life-style ultimately reducible to hedonistic principles. Biographically speaking, clashes of Dan's and other peoples' metanarratives come rather early in his life, but they are not discussed, but rather passed over. As early as in his student days, Dan finds his standards of living incompatible with those of his close friend Anthony, then a student of theology. The clash of the two persons' principles materialize in the act of 'adultery' that Dan and Jane 'commit', but which for more than a decade is not talked about. It is only in the face of Anthony's death that the matter is mentioned again (ch. 17).

In what is to be their last conversation, Dan and Anthony talk about the different values that both have tried to live. At the age of fifty, both have realised that however compelling these values were for them in their past lives, they do not continue to be so now.

On the part of Anthony, his strict adherence to the principles of catholicism is questioned, as well as his sometimes over-academic way of behaving towards other people - a point which he has not fully left behind, either. This self-critique of Anthony gives Dan the chance to do his own bit of accounting, which, unsurprisingly, does not yield a qualitatively better result. Dan sees himself guilty of superficiality, adherence to materialistic principles, and a general lack of concern for other peoples' interests, although these elements of self-critique are mentioned in other chapters, since Fowles has deemed it favourable that Dan does not get a chance to present Anthony with the horrors and failures of his own life, because Dan commits suicide before. The different chapters that encircle this their last meeting permit frequent and detailed flashbacks into Dan's life and his relationships with other women and help bring out one important principle in his life: promiscuity. It is within the story of his renewed acquaintance with Jane that his own attitude will change. Psychologically speaking, so far Dan has been leading a life in which women were pleasurable objects at the most (including Jenny McNeill), while in his relationship with Jane, he tries to treat her as an equal human being. In contrast to other Fowles' novels, the theme of existentialism is not as prominent in *Daniel Martin*, but it

is clear that it plays a part - a new element being that the process of initiation is a mutual one: Jane helps Dan on his way to greater authenticity as much as she is being helped by him on her way towards greater authenticity - and *vice versa*. His disinterested way of trying to help Jane is almost a form of worship of her for her own sake and thus is the appropriate counterpart to his treatment of other women. Clinically speaking, one could diagnose a 'madonna/whore' complex here.

Now what's the connection to metanarratives here? It is the fact that the madonna-whore-complex as a way of life is criticised by the very fact that in much of the book, Dan plays off the two sides against each other, thus levelling their respective forces. Although much of the action is structured in terms of the complex, it is also criticised. Some critics have found this quite disturbing, and accused Fowles of incongruity of standards: 'But it is paradoxical that this division of women into types, this madonna/whore complex (...) should be a basic organising principle of the very fiction in which it is so energetically condemned' (Loveday 1985; 137). I do not think that this critique is valid because the aim of organising much of the book in terms of the complex is to show how one of its main characters lives by it and tries to overcome it. Loveday here confuses the author (Fowles) with the (sometimes) first-person-narrator Dan. It is Dan (or, if you wish, the plausibility of Dan as a character searching for greater existential authenticity) who is responsible for organizing the book in terms of the madonna/whore-complex, and possibly Fowles who is responsible for criticising such a view on womankind.

Besides, it is difficult to imagine that Fowles as an author who is interested in psychological phenomena, should have overlooked such an incongruity. It is more probable that he has incorporated it for reasons, if only to question not the validity, but the fruits of psychological analysis - as he does when he has Dan muse over the worthlessness of a Freudian analysis of Phoebe's obsession with polishing: 'Any Freudian could nail Phoebe's obsession with polishing and the spick-and-span; but what was also entailed was a faith in certain elementary decencies of existence - in method, habit, routine, as a prerequisite of continuity.' (*DM*; 367) While Dan concedes that 'modern' scientific psychological analysis

obviously has its merits, it is still questionable whether they do justice to the emotional reality of every person they are applied to. Given the support and sympathy that Fowles generates for the domestic personnel that people his books (and of which Phoebe and Ben are a good example), we have every reason to believe that Fowles would not contradict Dan's opinion here...

What can be shown by looking at Dan trying to come to terms with his relationships with women, is how a character gradually overcomes and leaves behind the key tenets of his former life - and the same is true for Jane. While her first try at untying her ties with the militant Catholicism of her former life is a plunge into a doctrine no less absolute and strict, viz. communism; but she soon realizes that accepting an already given strict doctrine does not suit her character: 'I hate violence. And dogma. I know they *seem to be* the pre-requisites of change' (*DM*; 204, my emphasis). On their trip to Egypt, the medieval injustices they see and the way the people that are affected by them react to these make both Jane and Dan think about the relativity of the political concepts of the so-called industrial nations. While much of the critique is aimed at the ideal of the Western societies incorporating the ideal of progress (cf. *DM*; 489 and 525 for instance), in the final analysis, both capitalist and socialist doctrines are shown to lack the universal applicability and validity they claim to possess:

> 'It is beyond their conception. Cairo is as far away here as Berlin or London. They are very old, they have seen many so-called superior civilizations pass - with all their cruelties, their lies, their promises. For them all that remains is their river, and their land. That is all they care about. For them socialism is no more than another foreign culture. Perhaps good, perhaps bad.' (*DM*; 542)

More difficult is the question of the overall function of the critique of meta-narratives in this novel. I do not believe that the aim here is a specifically postmodernist one. It is all very well for different standards being played off against each other, but I think that the function of this playing-off is not so much to entice the reader to adopt a critical attitude concerning one of these problems for herself, but rather to show to what extent the shedding off of old convictions is a vital part in the two main characters' search for greater authenticity. For Dan,

this questioning is vital, since some of the character traits that we like to represent as tolerance and wisdom may actually be only forms of defeatism: 'We think we grow old, we grow wise and more tolerant; we just grow more lazy' (*DM*; 407).

Moreover, it is small wonder that a novel whose main character is a writer himself should extend the critique of metanarratives in its own realm as well. Consequently, we find a lot of comments which might be categorized as either metafictional, as undermining a certain metanarrative, or both. This is best exemplified by the numerous comments on the principles of writing, some of which we have already discussed in the previous section. While thinking about the principles of writing, Dan realizes that the supposedly 'modern' way of avoiding happy ends has already become a dogma in itself:

> The artist was not in pursuit of unfair political or economic power, but simply of his freedom to create - and the question was really whether such freedom was compatible with such deference to a received idea of the age: that only a tragic, black-comic view (with even the 'agnosticism of the 'open' ending suspect) of human destiny could be counted as truly representative and 'serious'. (*DM*; 429)

The scope of these thoughts is not limited to Daniel martin as a writer, they extend to *Daniel Martin* as a novel as well. It is , first of all, a questioning of the validity of the open ending, which, according to the quote, has become an unquestioned ideal in 'contemporary' novel writing; but it is as well a metafictional statement, because the novel we are reading is a novel that does not have an open, but a circular ending (the first chapter can be seen as the first chapter of Daniel Martin's novel, the novel he is intent on writing in the last chapter of *Daniel Martin*) and puts us back where we started. As Loveday has analysed, '(...) these devices function to direct the reader's attention to the constructedness, the artificiality, of what he is reading' (Loveday 1985; 153). Once again, we may question whether the novel we have been reading can really be categorized as a novel - as we may ask ourselves whether or not the actions we are reading about really do constitute a plot. I think that it is mainly in these moments that *Daniel Martin* strikes us as a real example of a postmodernist point of view: while modernism tried to do away with all the traditional constituents of received literary

genres (such that after all, who could tell which text belonged to what category and why do we have to have categories at all etc.), postmodernism undermines and questions: *Daniel Martin* - sort of - has a plot, but sometimes we might wonder if it really fulfils all the criteria, or just some, thus directing our attention to the individual work, and provoking us to work out the inherent criteria of one specific work and author, rather than a whole literary genre.

7. 5. The Critique of Representation

Much of what could be said in this section has already been hinted at in the previous sections: Dan's lack of uprightness when speaking with his girlfriend Jenny, the question of who represents what; questioned metanarratives about the truthful representation of facts in the media, the non-chronological presentation of the events of Dan's life. Consequently, I'll try to limit myself to a few remarks.

As Dan makes clear on the outset, his goal is a faithful representation of his own life, or, in his very words: "whole sight". Being a writer of scripts, it is quite natural for him to use film devices of representation in his fiction as well, but as the previous section should have made clear, there is also an ongoing discussion in Dan's head. While he generally quite sure that the novel better corresponds to his ideal, there are occasional intrusions of film devices, and sometimes they even seem to work better (cf. e.g. *DM*; 167). This statement, however, is immediately questioned by Dan accusing the film of being incapable of representing the temporal order of events: 'Film excludes all but now. (...) Is therefore the safest dream.' (*DM*; 168) Besides film, there are other mass media which Dan judges to be inferior to the novel as far as their 'truthfulness' is concerned: in his conversations with Barney Dillon, almost all of the mass media are accused of manipulating representation because they themselves are manipulated by big business. Here, a view of the mass media as instances of the 'simulacrum' (in the sense of Baudrillard) is linked with a critique of Western capitalism. But, as Barney Dillon notes, it is not only because of the interests of business and media that truthful representation has ceased to be an ideal, it is also because of the preferences of the potential

addressees: 'Maybe you have the quaint old belief that people buy newspapers to be informed.' (*DM*; 278) 'An audience likes to feel the details are right, but that's not what it's all about. It's a character's general plausibility as a human being.' (*DM*; 414)

While his discussion with Jane about hegemony in the Gramscian sense (*DM*; 418 f.) plainly shows that (even if he professes not to have read him) Dan is conscious of the politics of representation, he does need a little reminding from time to time, for example by the German professor they meet on their Nile cruise. To a very limited extent, the professor plays some of the role of a magus, an initiate, and assumes the partly Conchis-like* method of teaching Dan and Jane by telling them episodes from his own life. When discussing and criticising the Pharaohs for their totalitarian system, Dan is reminded: 'You must not think with modern minds, Mr. Martin. Then we understand nothing.' (*DM*; 546)

Dan's (as well as his colleagues') insights into the politics of representation are by no means a safeguard against distorted representation on their own behalf. Being used to the possible manipulations, he knows how to create a certain image of himself. This is clear as early as his and Jane's one-night-stand, when they meet again the next morning, and Dan is able to act normal, being fully conscious that he distorts reality for the sake of his friendship with Anthony: 'He found he could look at Jane without embarrassment. He even felt a belated pity for Anthony, and discovered how easy it was to pull wool over trusting eyes; and began to condone himself.' (DM, 117) Later on, we find the same phenomenon in his reactions to Jenny McNeill's comparatively very honest letters. Once again, different themes relate to each other, since it is precisely this ability to use representation to further his own interests that creates Dan's feeling of inauthenticity and incites him to try his hand at the novel - but

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* The Conchis-like role of the professor is a very subdued one indeed, largely because of the fact that only a small portion of the book is devoted to it. While the professor is not as frank with Dan and Jane from the very beginning as Conchis pretends to be frank with Nicholas. The story of his life during and after World War II contains a suitable number of personal stories with an existential morale , but they are not elaborated, and this is in keeping with the comparatively minor interest the novel takes in existentialism as a philosophy (as compared to *The Magus*). Nevertheless, one of the key tenets of an existentialist philosophy is mentioned: '"At this age it is sometimes more important to take decisions than to be sure they are right." Dan said, "At all ages?" "Perhaps."' (*DM*; 554)

it is Dan's selfishness and his lack of uprightness as far as Jenny is concerned that make us question whether he will ever achieve the existential authenticity (and truthful representation) he is striving for.
cisely this ability to use representation to further his own interests that creates Dan's feeling of inauthenticity and incites him to try his hand at the novel - but it is Dan's selfishness and his lack of uprightness as far as Jenny is concerned that make us question whether he will ever achieve the existential authenticity (and truthful representation) he is striving for.

Much of Dan's discourse attributes assuming the hidden viewpoint of a bird in a tree to his being of English origin. The discussion of Englishness in this as well as other Fowles' novels could fill a book on its own, suffice it to say that more often than not, Dan also uses his Englishness to explain, if not justify, his not very upright way with other people (cf. e.g. *DM*; 358, 576 ff.)

Just to what extend representation and the status of the represented might be problematic (if not positively misleading) becomes clear when looking at a different interpretation. In contrast to the above-mentioned position that the two females are a personification of the hero's (the author's ?) madonna/whore complex (with Jane as madonna and Jenny as whore), Huffaker believes that '[t]he less important Jenny *appears* more real most of the time than does Jane, although Fowles identifies Jane, the object of Daniel's autumnal romantic quest, as *real*, Jenny as *ideal*.' (Huffaker 1982; 135 - first emphasis mine)

Personally, I do not think that there is a tremendous difference in the 'realness' of the two characters. Once we accept that the novel criticises the madonna/whore division of women from within, all that can reasonably said is that the first impression a reader might have of either of the two is questioned later on in the book. On the other hand, as I have tried by emphasizing the verb in the quotation above, it is perfectly in keeping with the existentialist perspective of the book that Fowles should represent at least Jane more as a real person than as the madonna she has been in their respective past(s). In synthesis, the truth of the matter is that the descriptions of both women undergo a change from the ideal to the real: away from the stereotypes of the whore and the madonna

towards real people. After all, if it weren't two real people, Dan's choice would be irrelevant from an existential point of view.

7. 6. Intertextuality

While a number of Fowles' novels positively bristle with intertextual elements and allusions, the role of intertextuality in this novel is rather less important. Doubtless, there are a number of references to other texts, such as the constant mentioning of Rabelais (e.g. *DM*; 33) between Jane and Dan, but it is rather that Rabelais, for them, has become a symbol of eroticism. In the dialogues of Dan and Jenny, quite a number of literary allusions are made, such as a reference to *Macbeth*, or an overt comparison of Jenny's psychological situation to that of Emma in Jane Austen's novel ('It encourages me to think that I even once saw him as Mr Knightley to my Emma.' (*DM*; 251, 454 and 502)), but for the most part, these references serve to portray Dan and Jenny as literary-minded people rather than a real contribution to either the action or the critique of representation. Once again, *Emma* is a novel that is referred to more often than others, but it is unclear whether or not the references serve a likewise function as in, say, *The Collector* or *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* in which the references serve to highlight the characters' inauthenticity.

There are also a number of allusions to the *bonne vaux* or *domaine perdu* theme, which link the present novel both to Fowles other novels as well as to texts that feature prominently on Fowles' intertextual favourites, most notably *Le Grand Meaulnes* (cf. *DM*; 291 f. and 439). But here, it is at best difficult to say what is the lost domain of *Daniel Martin*: is it Thorncombe, is it the strange and exotic sites Dan and Jane encounter on their Nile cruise, or is it the deserted sight of Palmyra, where Dan and Jane are on the brink of choosing each other?

Comparatively more importance is allotted to the quotations of George Lukasc, which help to question the role of realism in modernist novel writing, and realism is one of the yardsticks Dan wants his novel to be judged by.

Although the text features a number of intertexts, their role is often less clear than in Fowles' other novels, where they assume the status of models or even direct influences. While in his other novels, the reading experience will often contradict it, in *Daniel Martin* Fowles' claim ('I haven't much time for the conscious theory of literary influence.' [Huffaker 1980; 35]) seems to be on the right track.

7. 7. Conclusion

In the last analysis, this involvement of the reader and the subdued role of the author link the field of metafiction with the critique of metanarratives, since on the level of fiction, it is questioned what the roles of author and reader are/should be within a novel - or, if you prefer, the traditional conceptualization of the authors' and readers' roles is doubted. This analysis has important implications for the analysis of representation in this novel. As already said in the discussion of the novel's circular ending (cf. above), the procedures and techniques used by Fowles in this novel directly point to its constructedness; in conjunction with the metafictional statements about a possible involvement of the reader; but on the level of representation, the facts that the reader is presented with are often incongruous: 'In the last analysis, Dan - if not Fowles himself - has abdicated his authorial role, and left it up to the readers to fit the pieces into an order that makes sense. This would be perfectly proper, if the parts he had left us with would only fit together.' (Loveday 1985; 120)

But while many critics have commented on the relatively minor interest that this novel takes in existentialism (compared to, say, *FLW*), there are nonetheless definite markers which allow for an interpretation of Dan and Jane as characters being on a quest for personal existential authenticity. On the level of content, it is a new phenomenon in Fowles' novels that there is no already initiate *magus* who helps the hero along. We might question to what degree Dan and Jane actually succeed in becoming existentially authentic characters (some doubts may be raised), but we might not question that there are definite reasons which allow an interpretation along existential lines. Thus, the above-mentioned abdication of the authorial role is questioned as well, and parallels

the supposed abdication of a plot: '(...) *Daniel Martin*, for all its initial subversion of narrative, positively bristles with pointers telling us how we are supposed to read it.' (Loveday 1985; 134)

With *Daniel Martin*, then, we are presented with a novel that takes a slightly less prominent interest in the quest for authenticity of its central character(s), without abandoning the theme altogether. The critique of representation is once more a prominent theme, but rather on the level of the problem of presenting a realist description of a character from his own, first-person-perspective: the politics of representation in a nutshell, if you wish. The experimental nature of this novel is a far greater one, and possibly links, as well as distinguishes it, from most prominent modernist novels. In principle, presenting a few days of the central characters' lives in a rather lengthy book comes close to abandoning the plot in favour of a stream-of-consciousness approach, but then we *do* find some leftovers of what is a plot at least as far as the psychological development of the central characters is concerned. Similarly, the book abounds in metafictional statements, but they are not the only content, and a lot of interpretative work will still have to be done in order to be able to say whether the novel's metafictional elements serve the purpose of highlighting the hero's quest for authenticity or *vice versa*.

8. Mantissa

8. 1. Introduction

Mantissa has been the one novel of Fowles which has probably provoked the smallest amount of critical discussion. Even as far as the present study is concerned, it will be of minor importance, since most of the postmodernist narrative strategies employed by Fowles have already been exemplified at the hand of his other novels. Instead, I will concentrate on the one aspect that is prominent in *Mantissa,* which is the problematizing of the complicity of the male writer in the perpetuation of certain images of women. These images, as it were, only serve the male writer's ends, and this is exactly what the heroine in *Mantissa*, Erato, tries to demonstrate.

This theme is closely linked to the theme of self-referentiality in the novel. While the complicity of the male writer is shown, it remains at best doubtful, as in *FLW* or *The Collector*, whether or not the narrator who tells us the present story is able to maintain enough critical distance not to perpetuate stereotyped images of women himself.

To get to know just what is happening in *Mantissa,* the reader has to do some detective work during the first part, in which the protagonist, Miles Green, is portrayed lying in a hospital, suffering a 'power cut' in Dr Delfie's words (*Mt*; 10). This in turn has provoked a loss of memory, evidenced by the fact that Green doesn't recognize his former wife. As the story unfolds, Dr Delfie and Nurse Cory are trying to administer to Green a form of therapy which involves the copulation of Delfie and Green. In the second part, it becomes clear that Delfie is one personification of the muse Erato, who, having read this very first part (which is therefore ostensibly ascribed to Green), reproaches him for perpetuating stereotyped, and not very accurate clichés of women in his narrative oeuvre. In the remainder of the novel, the reader witnesses their discussion, but the essential point of the novel is to reveal that the narrator of the pages we are reading (and by extension possibly Fowles himself as well), is prone to propagating the same stereotypes that Green is being reproached for.

8. 2. Literature as a Mental Disorder: The Politics of Representation as the Symptom of an Illness

As he is subjected to the sexual therapy that Dr Delfie endorses, Miles Green, who at this point is not yet able to make sense of what is happening to him, and who does not seem to know who he is, imagines himself to be an MP. As the sexual activities go on, he tries to imagine what his reaction to such flagrant immorality would be. His first reaction, he imagines, would be to try and reveal the scandalous procedures. Upon second thought, though, he deems it preferable not to reveal these procedures. In this scene, in which he imagines himself to be a politician, Green shows an exemplary instance of the politics of representation, because his reason for hypothetically closing his eyes when he

is faced with a scandal is motivated by a hypothetical highly personal motive: 'After all, a decent modern politician's prime duty is not to expose the wrong, but never in any circumstances to be caught in it.' (*Mt*; 47) As he begins to enjoy the treatment, he tells himself that he can't back out now, he has to '(...) accept the likelihood of a long treatment, and take it like a man.' (*ibid.*) It is clear that the pose of altruism and disinterestedness that Green adopts here is ridiculed to the extreme, since even the least discriminating reader will be aware of the fact that Green enjoys the treatment tremendously, even if he tries to voice his enjoyment in the post impersonal, i.e. politician-like, terms: '*One* felt rather pleasantly exhausted *one*self, now *one* came to think of it, and distinctly less worried about the loss of memory.' (*ibid.*, my emphasis)

The fact that Green imagines himself as an MP is highly significant here, because in the text, he has already heard Dr Delfie's statement that he is actually a novelist. Dr Delfie does not feel strong sympathies for novelists, as is evident by her comment that the social grouping and profession Green belongs to are judged by her to be unable to face life's challenges (*Mt*; 32), such that for her, literature is at best a form of escapism, or, as she will say later on, an illness (*Mt*; 142). When he is told he is a writer, his first reaction is one of incredulity at being thought of as a 'scribbler, mere novelist' (*Mt*; 48), and this characterisation shows that the public image he has of a novelist and of an MP influence his judgement as to his own profession. What is also shown here, as Woodcock (1984) has stated, is that the writer's imagination is triggered off by having sex - literature therefore seems to be closely linked with sexual activity. As Tarbox (1988; 127) has pointed out, *Mantissa* is 'a graphic illustration of the clinical relationship of writing to the writer's libido.'

Dr Delfie identifies the symptoms of the illness called literature as an overattachment 'to the verbalization of feeling' (*Mt*; 42) which takes the place of actual feeling, and thus echoes Baudrillard's notion of the *simulacrum*, the substitute for the real which has superseded what it was meant to imitate only. In her Freudian analysis, literature is consequently only a sublimated form of the writer's basic inability to have real emotions himself (the pronoun is deliberately male here). As she goes on to castigate Green's writing as pornographic and ob-

scene, as well as lacking in imagination, it becomes also clear that the motives she supposes for his bowing to capitalist, patriarchic taste, have their origin in the politics Green endorses as well as in the way he has been conditioned socially: "'Decent writin', i. e. non-bourgeois writin', was always political. 'Cept to middle-class zombies like you.'" (*Mt*; 54)

During the course of the events, it is revealed that Erato not only criticizes Green on general, but also personal grounds. She objects to his portrayal of women in particular, because she sees in his work the tendency to relegate women to the status of objects, and what is more, as sexualised objects to suit the male imagination: "'And I'll tell you what a modern satyr is. He's someone who invents a woman on paper so that he can force her to say and do things no real woman in her right mind ever would.'" (*Mt*; 85)

After she has made her basic claim clear, what follows is a rather complicated discussion on the status that the two protagonists play in the present text. Erato, as a muse, has done the impossible: she has entered the text she was meant simply to inspire and has objected to her treatment in it (as realized in the description of Dr Delfie and Nurse Cory). As both agree, muses are traditionally not allowed to have their say, and the absolute power he exerts over her is one of the points she reproaches Green for. But this absolute power is soon called into question, because it is clear that her appearance as a punk-skinhead-gothic at the beginning of part two is one that Green deems disgusting and inappropriate. If he had had his say, he seems to imply, she wouldn't have appeared clothed like that. Against this, she protests that it is really him who dictates the terms of the action, and that if he thinks she's real, that's rather because of his misguided notions: "'I only seem real because it is your nauseating notion that the actually totally unreal character I'm supposed to be impersonating should do so.'" (*Mt*; 85)

In a comment which also reveals some of the self-referentiality of the novel, Erato also questions Green's status as the narrator, and asks him whether or not there's an author behind him: "'To say nothing of *your* character. I notice there's not been a single word about his exceedingly dubious status. I wonder who's pulling *his* strings?'" Now, this comment is true and untrue at

the same time for a reader of *Mantissa,* for such a reader will in fact have read a number of comments about the status of the author. It remains true, though, that his status is dubious, also because of the fact that it is not clear whether the text we are reading is supposed to be a text by Green or not. It might also be that only the first part is the actual text by Green, and the other parts simply a depiction of his quarrel with Erato. As will be argued in the following section, though, the self-referential character of Mantissa as a novel indicates that the text we are reading is wholly by Green.

During their talk, Erato tells Green a number of episodes from her life involving different writers in different ages, covering a time span from Greek mythology to contemporary literature. Some of the episodes are highly erotic, and they succeed in inspiring Green's over-sexed imagination, an effect Erato both deliberately provokes and criticises. At times, she asks him not to relate these stories in any form to anybody other (*Mt*; 103 and 167), but given the assumption that we are reading a Miles Green text, he has evidently not respected to her wish.

Green's status is, as we have already seen, highly dubious, but not only from an epistemological or ontological point of view, but also as far as his alleged male chauvinism is concerned. As a character, he both confirms the diagnosis by Dr Delfie alias Erato as well as protests convincingly against it. When she reproaches him for the chauvinism of his literary oeuvre, he retorts "'You're confusing me with Walter Scott'" (*Mt*; 55), which is not altogether improbable, because in the remainder of the novel, Erato will occasionally get the places and names mixed up herself. Green is therefore aware that chauvinism can reveal itself in a literary work, an awareness that is not only limited to the works of other authors: "'How you've always admired my sensitivity over women, how you realized I had literary problems ... all the rest of it'" (*Mt*; 165). On the other hand, when properly provokes by Erato, Green can show crude chauvinism. After having told her that her amendments to his novel have been wholly against the grain of about everything that modern fiction can be about, after he has symbolically contained her criticism with his apparently greater knowledge of the principles of literature, he feels at ease to venture a few comments that are

clearly below the belt:

> 'All right. Then be a woman, and enjoy it. But don't try to think in addition. Just accept that that's the way the biological cards have fallen. You can't have a male brain and intellect as well as a mania for being the universal girl-friend. Does that sound unreasonable? (*Mt*; 121)

That Green is both a victim and a perpetrator of the very values of masculinity can be seen by the fact that he believes in an almost necessary connection of masculinity and genius, evidenced by his comment on Homer (later on, Erato will claim having written the *Odyssey* as a parable on the stupidity of men): '"Obviously he [Homer] was a man. He was a genius."' (*Mt*; 170) He is also personally hurt when she reveals that she has never actually read a line of what he has written so far (*Mt;* 178), a statement that is in plain contradiction to her analysis of his work as pornographic. Here, it is evident that his motives for criticising her are rather personal, indeed. Green's own theory of the principles of good fiction will reveal that point more fully (see the following subsection).

Despite the critique of his writing as being chauvinistic, it is clear that the controlling instance in the representation of events in *Mantissa* is Miles Green, and this explains the fact that some of the comments are written from an unconcealed, male-biased point of view. It is here that the narrator distances himself (herself??) for the very first time, not allowing anymore for the easy identification of Green and the narrator that was plausible up to this very point: 'All male sympathies must go to Miles Green; or so Miles Green himself overwhelmingly feels.' (*Mt*; 181) His conviction that '(...) he was much too significant a person to deserve such dismissive treatment' (*Mt*; 183) here merely confirms Dr Delfie's diagnosis that it is solipsism and egotism which are the illnesses that go by the name of literature.

At the very end of the novel, then, it becomes evident that all the critique advanced by Erato has been to no avail, since she can not stop Green from developing new variations of his old theme, in which Erato has to serve him in some of his more radically chauvinist fantasies: 'When Erato is made jealous enough over Nurse Cory, he will (...) propose a new alternative' (*Mt*; 185), which is that of an ever-compliant, non-English-speaking, devout Japanese girl, a cliché that reveals fully to what extent Green is actually a victim and

a perpetrator of the Collector Mentality analysed in much of Fowles' fiction. The reference to his own faults and stupidity ('As a matter of fact, he can't imagine how he was so stupid in the first place not to see (...)' [*ibid.*]) here paralleles the discourse of Clegg in *The Collector* when he is planning to capture another girl and make her his prisoner. That the reference to *The Collector* is not entirely fortuitous is evidenced by the fact that Erato herself cites Green as an example of the Collector Mentality, as well as alludes to an intertext already mentioned in that novel: '"You just collect and mummify [your female friends]. Lock them up in a cellar and gloat over them, like Bluebeard."' (*Mt*; 95) The description of the Japanese girl that Green immediately gives afterwards might well be read as a proof for the fact that he is also suffering from the *madonna-whore-complex* already analysed in much of Fowles' other fiction.

After all, then, despite the critique of Erato, it is till Miles Green who finally dictates the terms of what is represented in the novel we are reading. Though not deprived of a certain 'sensitivity over women' (*Mt*; 165), he is nevertheless propagating a male-biased picture of writing. As in novels such as *The Collector* or *FLW*, what is striking is the mixture of both complicity and critique that is adopted by Fowles as an author. While presenting us with what can be described as a legitimate, if exaggerated critique of male bias in fiction, this is nevertheless one of his novels in which the reader is most often relegated to the position of the voyeur, a strategy that we have already identified in *The Collector* and in *FLW*. Once again, this mixture of both complicity and critique is achieved via a blurring of the distinction of author and narrator. In keeping with the assumption that all literature is a solipsist kind of illness, the possibility that all we are reading is only taking place inside that brain of Green is hinted at by Green himself, who explains to Erato that the grey room of the hospital in part one had been a symbol for grey cells (*Mt*; 115). Besides the frequent reference to the greyness of the room, which would sustain such an interpretation, the cuckoo-clock (allegedly Flan O'Brien's) features prominently in the novel. While with the one symbol, Green's interpretation of part one is backed up, the cuckoo as a symbol for shifting one's responsibility for one's progeny rather comments on the otherwise unacknowledged avoiding

of responsibility that characterises much of an authors relation to his (female) characters, but can also be interpreted as a symbol for an author's avoiding to assume responsibility for his work.

Such an interpretation would be applicable not only to Miles Green, but to Fowles as well. One pointer to this fact is the reference to Green's 'sensitivity over women' (*Mt*; 165), which would be applicable to Fowles as well. As we have seen in Woodcock's analyses of both *The Collector* and *FLW*, Fowles can be said to be very concerned about women issues and feminism in general, but his authorial pose sat the same time reveals a dubious complicity with the male reader. Woodcock's analysis of *Mantissa* roughly runs along the same lines, and that's why his argument is not repeated here. Among the various strategies that Fowles employs to achieve this mixture of complicity and critique, are the clearly metafictional ones. For example, the meaning of the word 'mantissa' is explained in a footnote as '[a]n addition of comparatively small importance, especially to a literary effort or discourse' (*Mt*; 185). Since one of the themes of this novel is the influence that the Muses exert on the production of works of art, we are tempted to infer that their influence is rather minor. The actual text of *Mantissa* leaves the reader between espousal and refusal of this claim. The strategy here is clearly metafictional, as well as self-reflexive, for it ostensibly tells us something about the nature of fiction as such, while at the same time pointing to the very work of fiction we are reading. The metafictional and self-reflexive strategies employed will be analysed in the next section.

8. 3. *Mantissa* as a Self-Reflexive Novel

> 'The reflective novel is sixty years dead, Erato. What do you think modernism was about? Let alone post-modernism. Even the dumbest students know it's a *reflexive* medium now, not a reflective one.' (*Mt*; 117)

Miles Green tells Erato during their discussion on the principles of writing, and this is true for *Mantissa* as well. One hint to this fact can be found in the first part, at the end of which Nurse Cory enters the room and presents Green with a text he has written, which, in fact, begins with very first words of the novel we have started to read (*Mt*; 9 and 48). Self-referential passages feature prominently

in *Mantissa*, and they constantly restate the question whether what we are reading is actually a product of Green alone, or an account of a different narrator who writes about the encounter of Green and the muse Erato. For example, when Green asks Dr Delfie how long he has been in the hospital, she characteristically replies '"Just a few pages."' (*Mt*; 19) As he is about to have an orgasm, Dr Delfie tells him to prolong it '"to the last syllable."' (*Mt*; 45)

What begins as a rather playful displaying of narrative technique plays an important role in the development of the novel, because the technique is employed to highlight some of the claims made on both sides as far as the critique and the politics of representation are concerned. It is strange, to name but one example in this context, that Miles Green, who has to teach Erato about the nature of the novel, is sometimes being portrayed as being totally unaware of the reflexive nature of the novel. When Erato comments on his dubious nature as the narrator, if not author, of the very pages we are reading, his reaction is characteristic: '"I am. I'm me. Don't be ridiculous."' (*Mt*; 88) The fact that Green cannot differentiate correctly between author and narrator indicates that he is still imprisoned in the illusions of the text, which is strange enough for an author, as Erato will notice: '"I thought we were speaking outside the illusions of the text."' (*Mt*; 107)

Later on, Miles' point of view will be a different one, as well as clearly indicate that he is conscious of the illusions of the text, even though it does not preclude him from adopting a highly egoist principle for the composition of fiction:

> 'All we ever do nowadays is talk. I've had you just a miserable twice in what would have been, if this wasn't an unwritable non-text, one hundred and eighty pages at least. That's not what we're here for.' (*Mt*; 180 !)

It is significant to note here that the reference to the 'one hundred and eighty pages' can be found exactly on p. 180, and therefore reveals a narrator very consciously using and abusing the illusions of the text. If we identify Green as the narrator, his motif for the critique he is voicing can be described as sexual frustration. Even the principles of fiction are shown as being influenced not

only by purely aesthetic concerns, but by highly personal motives, such as the desire to have sex, as well. That the production of literature need not be due to purely artistic concerns will be pointed out in the following section, which will analyse the metafictional elements of the novel, as well as the theory of literature apparently endorsed by Miles Green.

8. 4. Metafiction

It has already been said that when reading *Mantissa*, we are also reading an account about the intimate relationship of the writer's sexual imagination to the production of actual text. As the imagined endless variations that Miles imagines indicate (which are, as said above, an instance of the Collector Mentality), what we are reading is not the final version of whatever text Green intended to publish, but rather one of the many variations that he does not intend to publish. In the words of Tarbox: '*Mantissa* is a kind of alter novel, the dark underside of an ordinary novel' (Tarbox 1988; 125), in which we as readers get 'what would presumably find its way into Mile's wastebasket.' (Tarbox 1988; 126)

But it is not only 'satyriasis, regression, infantilism, voyeurism and exhibitionism' (Tarbox 1988; 129) which can be considered as the driving forces behind literary productivity, but more profane factors still. Various strategies that influence the literature produced by Green and Erato are addressed in the text of *Mantissa*.

Green is very conscious about how his oeuvre will be received by a possible audience. What is striking in this respect is that he is especially prone to speculate about the possible reactions of the literary Critics to his fiction. Rather early in his discussion with Erato, he proposes an 'open' ending to their story, and gives the following reason for his choice: '"The critics would love it. They adore downbeat endings. It shows how brave they are leading upbeat lives themselves."' (*Mt*; 98) Miles is thus very conscious of the processes in the canonization of literature, and he knows tha it is not the general public, but the literary Critics, who form that canon. Discussing the role of humour in mod-

ern fiction, he has realised that "'(...) if I ever let that sort of thing creep into my published texts, my reputation would turn to ashes overnight.'" (*Mt*; 116)

But the dubious relationship that Green develops when dealing with his female protagonists cannot be attributed solely to the key tenets of literary modernism. Used thus, the principles of modernism seem only to be a pose behind which Green can hide his real motives for the overt, male-biased and explicit description of sexuality in his texts. As he will admit later on, sexuality features prominently in his fiction simply because of his own preferences: "'The curse of fiction." "Which is?" "All those boring stretches between the sexy bits.'" (*Mt*; 159) It is not clear whether this comment is meant to say something about the writer's or the readers' preferences when assuming a male reader. After all, it might well be that Green is also conscious of the taste and preferences of his readers, in which case the inclusion of the sex scenes would be a bowing to their demands. The same is true on the level of the author Fowles as well. As Woodcock has pointed out, in his depiction of their interaction, Fowles is 'clearly flirting with pornography.' (Woodcock 1984; 150) As Woodcock has analysed for the whole of Fowles' fiction, this dubious narrative pose can be interpreted as both complicity with, and critique of the male reader Fowles is ostensibly addressing. As such, the use of sexuality in the novel is shown to be influenced by commercial considerations as well.

These commercial considerations that a writer might have when writing a novel are commented on by Erato. Against Green's pose of adherence to literary Modernism, she voices some reservations inspired by Marxist Literary Criticism: "'I know the overwhelming stress the prevailing capitalist hegemony puts on sexuality. How difficult it is to escape:'" (*Mt*; 102) Later on, as she develops her own story of what their relationship might have been like, she drags in characters as representatives of certain social groups, assuming that if all the groups referred to in the novel bought it, it would certainly be a commercial success. "'Quite apart from the fact, which I'm sure you know, that gay readers now constitute 13.8 per cent of all English-speaking fiction buyers. Not that that would influence you. But it is a point.'" (*Mt*; 110) In a further parody of Marxist Literary Criticism, she argues that

> '[g]iven your very superficial level of intelligence, and the general clinical picture, I suppose I can hardly blame you for having been indoctrinated by the cheaply iconoclastic spirit of a talentless and self-destructives culture.' (*Mt*; 144)

In this parody, we can nevertheless identify a slightly modified version of Jameson's critique of contemporary art as bowing to the interests of a capitalist mass culture, but the ironic way in which Fowles has Erato voice Marxist Literary Criticism also undermines any easy identification with such a position.

Mantissa, in its metafictional dimension, not only tells us about the genesis of fiction and its close relation with the writer's libido. As we are witnessing the coming into being of a work of fiction, we also learn that it is difficult for the writer to abolish the pose of masculinity. In fact, for male writers and/or narrators such a goal might well be unattainable. This becomes clear at the example of Green, whose 'sensitivity over women' does not keep him from adopting highly chauvinistic principles, which are then identified and criticised by Erato. The narrators strategy to invoke 'higher' literary principles to justify the male-biased point of view is revealed to be simply a pose to perpetuate the dominant position of that male narrator, as well as pandering to the interests of a potentially male readership.

As far as Fowles as an author is concerned, this dilemma is repeated outside of the illusions of the text of *Mantissa* as well. The erotic scenes, and the fact that they more often than not border on the pornographic reveal that despite his espousal of feminism, and a general 'sensitivity over women' which applies to Fowles as well, Fowles cannot leave the male point of view much in the same way as Miles Green is unable to walk out of his own brain.

Among the literary poses critically undermined, modernism features most prominently. The novel is a conscious defending of the doctrines of modernism against the realist principles of Erato (and here the debate also results in a verbal containment of Erato by Miles Green perhaps highlighted by the *tour de force* of the ten sentences he is allowed, cf. *Mt*; 62 ff.). But modernism is also revealed to be simply a pose with which Green illegitimately defends his own chauvinism. Being a male narrator, Fowles suggests that while Green is able to identify and criticise a male-biased view, he is nevertheless unable to leave it

because of the simple fact that he is male. This paradox parallels the paradox of *historiographic metafiction*: while we know that texts have a problematic status, we also know that we can approach and interpret history only through these texts. Here, while the male point of view is undermined, it is also made clear that for male writers and narrators, it is the only point of view they can reasonably adopt.

9. Conclusion

While the above analysis of Fowles' novels have refrained from mentioning elaborately the various links that could be seen between the individual novels, it is now time to try and develop a coherent picture of them. When writing the above lines, I was torn apart between presenting and analysing the novels in chronological order or not. I have not done so, and for the following reasons.

If I had arranged the novels in their chronological order, I would have arrived at a conclusion similar to that of Acheson, who considers *Daniel Martin* as a turning point in Fowles' fiction because it 'is not in any straightforward sense an existential novel.' (Acheson 1998; 64) Nevertheless, it is true that from this novel on, existentialism plays a more and more subdued role in the fiction of Fowles. Existentialism as a theme features almost not at all in *A Maggot,* his latest novel to date.

Within the existentialist frame, and as far as the first three novels are concerned, the critique of representation has been identified as one of the postmodernist strategies *par excellence* that are used and combined with the respective existentialist messages.

In *The Collector*, the particularity of each representation is illustrated at the hand of the totally different accounts provided by both Clegg and Miranda. It is shown that the prejudices, predilections and wishes of the two characters strongly influence the way they represent the events. The fact that Miranda is criticised for her snobbism, as well as the fact that the author seems to generate sympathy for Clegg at least temporarily, results in a typically postmodernist mixture of complicity and critique, shattering as well as confirming the reader's

initial impression that Clegg is a moral monster.

In *The Magus*, the critique of representation is extended and presented as a critique of interpretation. As Nicholas tries to make sense of the events on Phraxos, it is shown that his hermeneutic efforts are not scientific, but mostly influenced by his personal preferences. In addition, the constructedness of what we like to conceive of as reality is shown. It is in this novel that the theme of existentialism is introduced fully, and at the example of Nicholas, we see that the espousal of a certain doctrine may be due to the wish of presenting a certain picture of oneself. As in practically all of Fowles' fiction, the male protagonist is shown to be the victim of a *madonna/whore*-complex eventually becoming manifest as Collector Mentality, i.e. a tendency to re-ify or objectify women and appropriate them for one's own needs without ever caring for them.

This Collector Mentality is also exhibited in the two novels that count as *historiographic metafiction*, viz. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *A Maggot*, both of which are obsessed with the question of how we can know something about the past from a contemporary perspective. Both novels do so in an attitude of both complicity and critique, exemplifying what Hutcheon has called one of the 'paradoxes of postmodernism'. It is in these novels, too, that the political motivations that cause certain forms of representation are brought to light, accentuating once again what has been called the Politics of Representation. In *FLW*, this is combined with a highly intrusive author who adopts a sometimes dubious pose of complicity with his male character. In *A Maggot*, the author Fowles is less intrusive, at the example of Ayscough, the Politics of Representation are perhaps realized at their most strong.

In the two other novels, as well as the collection of stories *The Ebony Tower*, which have been written in between both *FLW* and *A Maggot*, the complicity of both author and narrator in the act of creation is commented on. It is hardly a coincidence that Daniel Martin is reproached for his chauvinism by Jenny McNeill in much of the same way as is Miles Green by Erato. The theme of the complicity of the author or the narrator in the creation and propagation of certain male-biased stereotypes of women had already been foreshadowed in *FLW*, but it is in these three books that it comes out most clearly. This is because of the

fact that it is these three books who concentrate on the act of writing fiction itself. It is shown that while fiction can help to deconstruct certain meta-narratives, the author himself (the pronoun being deliberately masculine here) is at times propagating the very stereotypes he's trying to deconstruct.

Since the analysis of existentialist elements in Fowles' novels is already more or less completed, I decided to present the novels not in the exact chronological order, because I wanted to highlight the complicity of the author, which is, as I hope to have shown in the discussions of the individual novels, also a complicity on behalf of the reader.

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