Routledge Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature

LACANIAN NON-RAPPORT IN THE NOVELS OF JOHN FOWLES

IMPOSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS

Mahitosh Mandal

ROUTLEDGE

Lacanian Non-Rapport in the Novels of John Fowles

Lacanian Non-Rapport in the Novels of John Fowles offers the first systematic Lacanian study of the fiction of John Fowles. Although Fowles repeatedly acknowledged his engagement with psychoanalysis, his novels have rarely been examined in relation to Jacques Lacan's theorisation of sexual non-rapport. This book argues that the persistent misrecognitions of love and the recurrent failures of relationships in his fiction are structured by the Lacanian insight that "there is no sexual relationship." Through detailed readings of Fowles's six novels, the study demonstrates how Fowles's characters confront the structural impossibility of sexual rapport and attempt to negotiate it through fantasy, desire, and symptom. It further suggests that Fowles's fiction can be read as unwittingly Lacanian in its dramatization of sexual non-rapport. The book also shows how the enigmatic and inconclusive narrative forms often associated with Fowles's postmodernism are underwritten by this psychoanalytic logic. By bringing Lacanian theory into dialogue with Fowles's novels, the study offers a new interpretation of one of the most distinctive voices of twentieth-century British fiction.

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For Slavoj Žižek, whose thought continues to provoke and compel

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Introduction

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Fowles but Were Afraid to Ask Lacan

There are several reasons why a systematic and comprehensive Lacanian psychoanalytic reading of all six novels of the British postmodern author John Fowles is imperative, although not undertaken so far. Perhaps the most obvious one is Fowles's own persistent referencing of the psychoanalytic discourse throughout his fictional works. His references to psychoanalysis are wide-ranging, including an extensive deployment of psychoanalytic vocabulary, clinical situations, analyst-characters, and psychoanalytic themes. Psychoanalytic terms and concepts like "sadism," "masochism," "repetition compulsion," "obsession," "perversion," "hysteria," "neurosis," "loss of the mother," "mother substitute," "father substitute," "gaze," "psychological tests," "Oedipus complex," "castration," "overidentification," "case history," "id-ego-superego," "unconscious," and so on are scattered throughout the pages of his novels. While Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung, among others, are frequently mentioned, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts appear as characters or heavily influence the portrayal of characters. *The Collector*, closely following the style of Freud's case histories, evokes the psychical crisis of Frederick and presents Miranda offering psychoanalytic interpretations of him, in terms, for example, of his fraught relation with the mother. In *The Magus*, a group of psychoanalysts on the island of Spetsai administer psychological tests to Nicholas and ultimately present a Freudian case study of him. The Foreword to the revised edition of *The Magus* declares the author's use of Jung's ideas while writing this novel and the novel itself, through the staging of "godgame," dramatises and parodies psychoanalysis and clinical psychology. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman,* a psychiatrist, Dr. Grogan, is seen treating patients and offering the male protagonist, Charles, an analysis of the mysterious female character Sarah Woodruff, considering her behaviour as a form of hysteria. Chapter 28 of this novel also includes the real psychoanalytic study of the case of Emile de La Roncière and Marie, the daughter of Baron de Morell, a commanding officer living in France around 1835. Daniel Martin in the eponymous

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novel is described by the narrator as manifesting "a quasi-Freudian searching for the eternally lost, his vanished mother" (Fowles, *Daniel Martin* 539). He also engages in Freudian interpretation of the behaviours of his wife Nell as his daughter Caro engages in a "breakfast psychoanalysis" of him (Fowles, *Daniel Martin* 311). In *Mantissa*, Dr. Delfie, claiming to be a clinical psychologist, uses "Freudian jargon" at length to analyse the amnesia of the male protagonist and diagnoses him as a "case" of "castration anxiety" (*Mantissa* 47). While advancing a psychoanalytic treatment, she even asks him to "reread Freud" and Otto Fenichel's book *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* (*Mantissa* 143). Finally, by Fowles's own admission, the novel *A Maggot* emerged from an image of "faceless" travellers that "kept obstinately rising from [his] unconscious" – linking the narrative to the authorial unconscious.

The psychoanalytic discourse as it appears in Fowles's fictional universe may be and has been interpreted in several ways. At times, psychoanalysis is openly parodied or made fun of; at other times, it functions as what Fredric Jameson calls *pastiche* or "blank parody," where psychoanalytic situations are deployed "neutrally" without any serious intent to subvert (Jameson 17). Fowles's novels also appear to exhibit, in Jean-François Lyotard's sense, a postmodern "incredulity" toward the grand narrative of psychoanalysis (xxiv). This book argues that all these interpretations, gesturing towards Fowles's ambivalence towards psychoanalysis, are equally valid because, ultimately, Fowles's narratives are structurally dependent on psychoanalytic theory and practice and are underwritten by a psychoanalytic logic. This monograph claims that Fowles *hystericises* psychoanalysis by punctuating and interrogating the analyst's discourse from within a hysteric structure precisely due to his sustained intellectual, artistic and experiential investment in psychoanalysis as a locus of supposed knowledge and that he is a Lacanian without knowing it. This is true particularly when Fowles parodies psychoanalysis because Fowlesian parody of psychoanalysis, as discussed in the chapter on *Mantissa* in this volume, has a relation to the unconscious – of Fowles and as structured in the language of the text – because it is not what it seems to be about but, like Freud's theorisation of the jokes as a formation of the unconscious, is "always about something else" and in Fowles's case referring to his and his narratives' latent structural investment in psychoanalysis. Fowles's incredulity towards psychoanalysis too hides underneath a deep fascination with psychoanalysis – his innate conviction regarding psychoanalytic theory but his manifest interrogation of the same, even frustrations with the same – largely informed by a flawed understanding of psychoanalysis, as will be shown, when he finds it unable to answer his queries. This thesis is borne out not only by the recurrence of psychoanalytic themes, characters, and vocabulary in his novels but also by Fowles's sustained interest

in psychoanalysis for its clinical efficacy and its effective role in artistic creation, and in the interpretation of life, the unconscious, literature, art, and culture.

Fowles's Sustained Interest in Psychoanalysis

Fowles was substantially acquainted with the psychoanalytic discourse. He mentions Freud, Jung, and Alfred Adler quite frequently in his journals, interviews, and philosophical reflections. He used Freudian and Adlerian ideas to analyse himself and his wife; he mentioned his father's undergoing of Freudian psychoanalysis, the need for a novelist to know or undergo psychoanalysis, and his being "psychoanalysed by proxy" by a critic; he spoke of the clinical relevance of Freud and fictional relevance of Jung and observed that Freud was useful for child psychology and Adler for adult psychology; he also used Freudian, Jungian, and Adlerian psychoanalytic and psychological ideas to analyse the origins of artistic creativity and applied those ideas to analyse literary texts, photographs, sports, and human life in general (Fowles, *Wormholes* 139). He even went to the extent of expanding the psychoanalytic schema of Freud by theorising the concept of the Nemo. While he had read Freud, Jung, Adler, Karen Horney, and D. W. Winnicott at varying degrees, he also attempted to read the works of Jacques Lacan, although he was frustrated with the latter's obscurity.

Fowles's Use of Psychoanalysis in Life Situations

Fowles was very much acquainted with and approved of Freudian psychoanalysis both in its clinical and theoretical forms. His father, Robert Fowles, sought psychoanalysis in 1923 due to two reasons – his return from the war and the death of his father, both of which "induced a nervous crisis" so much so that "he could not even hold a teacup." One of the Freudian explanations for his suffering was "that he had lost his mother at the age of six and had never acclimatized himself to his young stepmother" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:132). The analysis may not have been effective in the long run since the father succumbed to pessimism as he grew old. But as Warburton rightly mentions, Robert Fowles's seeking "help through Freudian psychoanalysis" had been "quite a radical act at that time, both intellectually forward and, perhaps, desperate" (6).

Fowles himself was open to undergoing psychoanalysis, particularly because he was a novelist. In an interview, he mentions, "I suspect a straight analyst, more or less in Freud's footsteps, would suit me better medically, if I ever needed such attention – which perhaps I do…like every other novelist!" (Baker 185). Although Fowles did not seek psychoanalysis

in reality, he felt he was "psychoanalysed by proxy" by the Yale psychiatrist Professor Gilbert Rose, who connected the notion of separation from and loss of the mother as a crucial component for the genesis of Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Fowles was quite impressed by Rose's psychoanalytic interpretation and wrote an essay, following Rose's formulation, to analyse Thomas Hardy's novel *The Well-Beloved*, drawing on Hardy's deep connection with his mother (Fowles, *Wormholes* 139).

Although Fowles never visited the clinic, he used Freudian ideas to frequently analyse his dreams. In a journal entry dated 20 March 1965, he offers a brief Freudian analysis of a "Strange dream" he had dreamt about learning the death of the Irish novelist Edna O'Brien in a car-crash (Fowles, *Journals* 1:626). In the dream, someone mentioned that she was murdered by "nails," and Fowles dreamt of "an image of a shoulder pierced by nails" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:626). Fowles goes on to label this as "a suppressed-envy dream; a wish to crucify" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:626). He brings up Freud to evoke the phallic, maternal, and incestuous implications of the dream: "On a Freudian level, the phallic symbolism of the nail in the flesh is obvious; and Edna O'Brien's charm is a distinctly maternal one. She is the original lame-ducker. Perhaps our sadistic pleasure in pain always has this incestuous undercurrent; it is always partly a metaphor of the one totally forbidden act" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:626).

Not just dream analysis, Fowles used Freudian insights to analyse his behavioural patterns and character traits. In another journal entry dated 28 February 1962, Fowles mentions an autobiographical poem by him about "will-lessness" or procrastination that mainly pertains to grading, and writing and revising of drafts. Fowles applies Freudian theory by likening his procrastination – "refusal to do at the right time what must be done" – to the Freudian notion of anal-stage retention, where children derive control from withholding faeces; he notes "all the Freudian anal connotations" in getting "perverse satisfaction out of not doing what I myself want to do; saving it up" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:496). According to him, this is an attempt to fight against obligations and assert his freedom. Warburton refers to how, at another crucial moment in his life, Fowles experienced a "great Freudian truth" while deciding to leave the Greek island where he had been teaching (Fowles, *Journals* 1:375). The Freudian truth in question, paraphrasing Fowles's journal entry and Warburton's interpretation of the same, was that a person is shaped by their early psychic formations, and these cannot be escaped from the outside. One must work through them from within. The defences formed in childhood turn into limitations in adulthood, and real psychological freedom comes only by engaging these mechanisms rather than suppressing them (Warburton 195–196).

Although from a Lacanian standpoint, only someone who has clinically undergone psychoanalysis and has been trained as an analyst can

psychoanalyse others, Fowles, without any such expertise, continued not only self-analysis but also his wife's analysis. It may be noted that due to a specific reason Fowles was opposed to his wife Elizabeth Fowles's consultation of a psychoanalyst. In a journal entry from 31 March 1957, Fowles writes that Roy Christy, Elizabeth's estranged husband and Anna's father, made a "desperate attempt" to interfere by urging her to see his psychoanalyst – someone he was seeing as part of his own therapy (Fowles, *Journals* 1:389). Roy probably hoped this would affect her thinking or pull her back to him during their difficult separation. Fowles was angry because he felt Roy was trying to manipulate the situation and undermine their new relationship. It was the manipulative context that caused Fowles's disapproval of his wife's analysis.

Fowles himself, however, used Freudian concepts to psychoanalyse Elizabeth on his own, not without her sometimes feeling disturbed by his interventions. He started analysing her dreams, and as Warburton notes, found that she possessed "a much richer unconscious" than he did because whereas "her colour-filled dreams teemed with significant people and travels," his dreams contained "familiar landscapes and familiar interests: china collecting, writing, birds and gardens, his bank" (Warburton 271). Fowles's attempt to psychoanalyse Elizabeth did not go far. Warburton recounts that Elizabeth, thrice in a week, "dreamed of being given responsibility for a baby or an infantlike creature, of feeling delight, then of rejecting it and feeling terrible guilt and shame" (Warburton 271). Fowles applied a Freudian framework to these dreams and claimed that they related to "a childhood resentment of her sister's birth and the 'trauma' of an interrupted relationship with their mother and father. The rejected baby figure, Fowles believed, was always Elizabeth's sister, Joanne, born when Elizabeth was fifteen" (Warburton 271). But it could well have been Elizabeth's daughter from an earlier marriage, Anna, Warburton argues, and that "Elizabeth still was visited in her dreams by the sense of confusion and shame that had caused her such anguish ten years earlier" (Warburton 271). Warburton tells us that Elizabeth "broke off telling John her dreams at this point, saying, 'This isn't doing me any good. It doesn't mean anything.... The more you discover the more reason I find to dislike myself'" (Warburton 271). Warburton mockingly notes, "Lost mythic mothers from infancy were more intriguing to Fowles than were the lost infants of real sorrowing mothers" (Warburton 271).

Not only Freud but Fowles made use of Adler too. He mentions that he found Adler to be "more convincing than Freud" because, according to him, "Freud is convincing in relating to childhood and adolescence; and inasmuch as adults are the children of their own young selves, valid. But of all that changes an adult, the sexual portion, Adler takes over" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:393). Understandably, he used Adler to analyse "a violent fit

of hysteria" that Elizabeth suffered in response to him "inadvertently" sharing their phone number with women she worked with. He explained her reaction in terms of her inferiority and insecurity, as a "self-purging response to her feeling of inferiority, without the usual ulterior motions of hysteria" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:393).

While Fowles differentiated between Adler and Freud, he also distinguished between Jung and Freud, and developed some convictions of his own about the distinctness of Freudian and Jungian analysis. In an interview with Dianne L. Vipond, Fowles states, "I've always said that if I knew myself deeply disturbed I'd rather go to a Freudian; but that Jung is infinitely more valuable for an artist" (Vipond 203). He reiterates this in his interview with Katherine Tarbox:

> I owe a great deal to Freud and Jung. I've often said that if I felt I needed psychiatry I would certainly go to a Freudian. Freudian theory does interest me. I still find it a very satisfying kind of symbolism. Whether it's actually true or not, I don't know, but I like its mechanical structure. I think for a writer, Jung is actually the best person to read. He's very fertile and fruitful.
>
> Tarbox, "Interview with John Fowles" 165

Alongside Freudian thought, Fowles used Jungian ideas as well to analyse life situations. In a journal entry dated 16 March 1975, Fowles explains a common human tendency to "censor the personal past," and he feels there are psychological reasons, from a Jungian perspective, for this: such censorship happens "at the dictates of our varying sets of Jungian complexes" (*Journals* 2:177). He further mentions Elizabeth as "a fulfilled personality, comparatively; 'individuated,' in Jungian terms" (*Journals* 1:313). Furthermore, in *The Aristos*, Fowles draws on Jung to show how human behaviour is shaped by deep, unconscious patterns. He notes that beneath ordinary pleasures lie a basic "functional pleasure…essential to our being," which he believes should ground ethical action – hence his remark that "we should evacuate good" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 79–80). He also uses Jung's idea of the complex, "an idea… about which we cannot think rationally," to explain why people fiercely defend certain psychological "territories," much like birds protecting nests (Fowles, *The Aristos* 180–181).

Fowles's Psychoanalytic Conception of Artistic Creation

Psychoanalytic ideas not only influenced Fowles's self-analysis, analysis of his wife's unconscious, and of human behaviour in general, it also, understandably, shaped his conception of artistic creativity. Fowles states, in his interview with David North, that literary writing is intricately linked to

a sense of loss, in a Freudian sense, experienced at a young age. He says "writers are quite literally born" and not made, and that when it comes to explaining the art of writing, he is a Freudian (North 51). He adds,

> The Freudian theory of this, that I would apply to all artists, is that some people have had a very peculiar experience after the loss of their mother and the discovery of their own separate identity. Young infants really don't have clear frontiers between themselves and their mother. With some people it's the kind of fluidity of this experience, the changing of shape and the supreme happiness from the sort of union with mother that probably dominates their adult lives, unconsciously of course. All this goes into the unconscious. Although I am not a total Freudian, I find this very convincing because I think what is interesting about the novel is the obsessive repetitive need in true novelists to go on telling stories.
>
> (North 51)

In his interview with Raman K. Singh, Fowles reiterates that

> Beyond a certain point, you can't really teach writing. My opinion is that it's pointless to teach people who haven't got the right genetic make-up; and who haven't had the right infancy experiences – I'm a Freudian – the right kind of separation trauma…because I think this really is the heart of all art.
>
> (Singh 93)

Fowles was convinced of his Freudian notion of artistic creation after he read Gilbert Rose's article on *The French Lieutenant's Woman* that connected the genesis of the novel to the novelist's experience of loss. In his essay "Hardy and the Hag," Fowles says that he agrees with Gilbert Rose's psychoanalytic theory of artistic creativity because "it largely confirmed – and greatly clarified – intuitive conclusions" of his own (Fowles, *Wormholes* 139). Rose's basic idea was the separation from the mother – with whom the baby felt one, or as Lacan would call, was in a "dyad," at the beginning of infancy. This separation, as Fowles puts following Rose, is "deeply marked by the passage from a unified magical world to a discreet 'realist' one" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 139). An artist is someone who tries to "recover…the early oneness with his mother" and re-create "the adult versions" of that early experience (Fowles, *Wormholes* 139). Depending on environmental and other factors, an artist is able to make this return through art. As Fowles notes, "The artist is simply someone who does the journey back on behalf of the less conditioned and less technically endowed" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 140). This theory of Rose, Fowles feels,

is "a plausible and valuable model" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 140). He further adds that artists are thus justifiably marked by the "repetitive nature of their endeavour, the inability not to return again and again on the same impossible journey" or "an unconscious drive towards an unattainable" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 140). He further adds, following Rose, that

> The theory also accounts for the sense of irrecoverable loss (or predestined defeat) that is so characteristic of many major novelists. […] Associated with this is a permanent – and symptomatically childlike – dissatisfaction with reality as it is, with the 'adult' world that is the case. Here too one must posit a deep memory of ready entry into alternative worlds.
>
> (Fowles, *Wormholes* 140)

Since Fowles believed in the psychological and psychoanalytic roots of art, he was very approving of interpretations of literature from these perspectives. In an interview with Carol M. Barnum, he states he prefers psychoanalytic criticism to conventional literary criticism: "I take the view that Freud and Jung were both very close to novelists themselves, or myth creators (as was Darwin, by the way); but they provide very useful scales or maps. I have often found psychoanalytic and psychiatric investigations of books a great deal more fertile than purely literary (or classifying) ones" (109–110). Understandably, not only Rose's Freudian reading of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* but also Julius Rowan Raper's psychoanalytic reading of *The Magus* using the Austrian-American psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's ideas was admired by Fowles. In a journal entry dated 14 December 1988, Fowles states that he "rather liked" Raper's reading which employed Kohut's notion of "grandiose self" to analyse the male protagonist Nicholas Urfe (*Journals* 2:387–388). He further mentions that this interpretation "senses what I was trying to do – that its ends lay more in psychotherapy, mending the modern soul, than literature," adding that "Kohut sounds interesting. I must try to read him" (*Journals* 2:387–388).

Fowles's Psychoanalytic Interpretation of Literature, Art, and Culture

Fowles did not limit himself to theorising artistic creation in psychoanalytic terms and highlighting the significance of psychoanalytic literary criticism. He himself offered psychoanalytic interpretations of literary works. Such readings were wide-ranging from serious commentary to scattered responses to literary works. For instance, Fowles appreciated Iris Murdoch's 1961 novel *A Severed Head* as "very funny" despite widespread criticism, calling it "Freudian marivaudage" that is to say, a witty, intricate

romantic comedy infused with psychoanalysis (Fowles, *Journals* 1:578). In his reading of the works of Marie de France and Molière, Fowles mentioned Freudian perspectives. For instance, he states that "The Freudian and Jungian undertones of almost all her [Marie's] stories are obvious" and that the duality of Dom Juan – his being "a two-edged knife, both scourge and criminal" – in Molière's play by the same name is equivalent to Freud's notions of id and superego (Fowles, *Wormholes* 155). Fowles also considered *Jude the Obscure* to be "really a Jungian novel, the history of an obsession with the rain-virgin, the *princesse lointaine*, and all the rest of that shadowed phylum" (*Journals* 2:53).

However, Fowles's most serious and detailed psychoanalytic engagement with literature is his reading of Hardy's *The Well-Beloved* in the essay "Hardy and the Hag." In an interview, Fowles refers to this essay and draws attention to the significance of the erotic in an author's life. He mentions, "I certainly think the erotic was very important for Hardy. The avoiding of any direct contact with it, or expression of it, the slipping around it, plays an enormous part in his novels. He was obviously a shy and repressed man" (Baker 191). In the actual essay, "Hardy and the Hag," Fowles uses Freudian insights, considering the novel as Hardy's psychoanalytic confession of an obsession with an elusive, idealised female muse that fuels creativity but demands eternal denial of consummation. He goes on to consider the "tryst" motif in Hardy as "a scarcely concealed simulacrum of the primary relationship of the child with the vanished mother" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 146). Fowles's reading of Hardy reveals a lot about himself and his writing. While he himself evokes *The French Lieutenant's Woman* in connection with Hardy, Jan Relf in the Introduction to *Wormholes* notes, "Fowles's essay on Hardy's novel *The Well-Beloved* probably reveals at least as much about himself as about his subject; and if the 'shared predicament' has, as he tells us, been painful and problematic in daily life, it has also been, for both writers, extraordinarily and indispensably important for the imaginative and creative life" (Fowles, *Wormholes* xxiii).

Not just literature, Fowles used the psychoanalytic lens to study painting, photography, and the culture of sports. In a journal entry dated 9 November 1958, he mentions having visited an art exhibition of Jackson Pollock at Whitechapel Gallery. He found one painting, titled "Deep," particularly remarkable because it showed some profound psychoanalytic and poetic insight through an "abstraction of the mystery" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:420). Furthermore, in his introductory essay to a book of photographs titled *Shipwreck*, Fowles used Freudian ideas to interpret the sea. For example, according to him, "the wrath of the sea is interpreted both as superego and as id. It is on the one hand a thing without restraint, a giant bull in a salt ring; on the other it is the great punisher of presumption,

the patriarch who cuts that green stripling, man, down to size" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 277). Evoking his conversation with a psychiatrist, he further observes that "a morbid obsession with disaster [shipwreck, in this case] is a common defence against depression" (Fowles, *Wormholes* 278). Additionally, Fowles notes that games and sports are "far more important to us, and in far deeper ways, than we like to admit" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 158). He evokes the Freudian interpretation of games – "Football consists of twenty-two penises in pursuit of a vagina; a golf club is a steel-shafted phallus; the chess king and queen are Laius and Jocasta; all winning is a form either of evacuation or of ejaculation; and so on" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 158). But he points out that "Such explanations may or may not have value in discussing the origin of the game." Instead, he finds Adlerian explanation to be more plausible which considers a game as "a system for achieving superiority" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 158). Furthermore, a game is also "a system (like money getting) that is to a certain extent a human answer to the inhuman hazard of the cosmic lottery; to be able to win at a game compensates the winner for not being able to win outside the context of the game" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 158).

Fowles's *Nemo* vis-à-vis Lacan's Real

Fowles's introduction of the concept of *Nemo* is a striking intervention in the Freudian discourse, but it resonates even more strongly with Lacan's notion of the Real. In a journal entry dated 1 October 1957, Fowles notes that "Nemo – is not this fear of inner nothingness a much more accurate definition of the psychic urge than Freud's libido or Adler's superiority drive? Especially where writers are concerned. All writing is a reaction against nemo" (Fowles, *Journals* 1:398). In *The Aristos* he elaborates further on this point. He states that all "anxieties" are traceable to Nemo, which is "a supreme source of anguish" He notes that Freud's tripartite division of the psyche into id, ego and superego is founded on Freud's notion of "libido, sexual desire" – "which wells or explodes out of the unconscious, is utilized by the ego and more or less regulated by the superego." He agrees with later psychologists who believe that "while sexual desire is an important constituent of the raw energy that orientates and fuels our behaviour, it is not the only one. Another very primitive drive is the need for security." He thus introduces a fourth element in the human psyche, "using a word indicated by the Freudian terminology, I call the nemo." Nemo, Latin for "nobody," here refers to "the state of being nobody – 'nobodiness.'" Nemo, for him, is "anti-ego," analogous to "anti-matter" in physics (Fowles, *The Aristos* 47).

Fowles even argues that the reason psychologists have not paid much attention to Nemo is because, unlike the "two truly primitive drives of

sexual and security (or survival) desire," it is a recent experience for humans. He says that while these two drives are also found in animals, it is nemo that constitutes "a specifically human psychic force." Furthermore, Nemo is "a negative force" unlike sexual desire and the desire for security – humans are not attracted to it but repelled by it. He puts it succinctly: "The superego, ego and id at least seem broadly favourable to the self, and help preserve both individuality and the species. But the nemo is an enemy in the camp" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 48). Nemo is thus a sense of negation of the self or ego. It is what the ego cannot be: One cannot be someone else, one cannot have an eternal life, one cannot be "without physical and psychological defects" – all these negatives constitute the Nemo (Fowles, *The Aristos* 48). He further adds,

> The nemo is a man's sense of his own futility and ephemerality; of his relativity, his comparativeness; of his virtual nothingness. […] All of us are failures; we all die. […] Nobody wants to be a nobody. All our acts are partly devised to fill or to mask the emptiness we feel at the core. (Fowles, *The Aristos* 49).

Fowles's notion of Nemo is thus closely aligned with Lacan's notion of the subject's encounter with the Real, understood not as empirical reality but as void, anxiety, trauma, death, and nothingness – that which resists Symbolisation. His notion of "somebody," by contrast, corresponds to what Lacan theorises as Imaginary and Symbolic constructions of subjectivity. Fowles notes,

> We have different ideas of what constitutes a "somebody"; but there are certain generally accepted specifications. It is necessary to make my name known; I must have power – physical, social, intellectual, artistic, political…but power. I must leave monuments, I must be remembered. I must be admired, envied, hated, feared, desired. In short, I must endure, I must extend, and beyond the body and the body's life…Belief in an afterlife is partly an ostrich attempt to cheat the nemo. (Fowles, *The Aristos* 49)

All these constitutive elements of "somebody" closely resemble Lacan's notion of Imaginary subjectivity based on misrecognition and narcissistic self-images, as well as Symbolic subjectivity structured through law, language, and social recognition.

Furthermore, for Fowles, Nemo is what produces a sense of "insignificance" in the subject: "my insignificance in face of all that has existed, exists, and will exist. We are almost all dwarfs, and we have the complexes and psychological traits characteristic of dwarfs: feelings of inferiority,

with compensatory cunning and malice" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 49).This experience of insignificance corresponds to the subject's encounter with the Real in Lacanian psychoanalysis and anticipates Lacan's formulation of the subject as "trash" at the end of a successful analysis – stripped of Imaginary grandeur and Symbolic guarantees. Human life, according to Fowles, is an attempt to "defeat the nemo" either through conformity or through conflict. For instance, "If I conform to the society I live in, I will use the agreed symbols of success, the status symbols, to prove that I am somebody" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 50). On the other hand, one way to defeat the Nemo for ordinary people is to turn to "the small personal world" – "to friends, relations, neighbours, colleagues," while "the most common refuge against the nemo is the marriage, the family, the home. Children, the long walk of the blood, are the real life-insurance" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 53). All these strategies indicate, from a Lacanian point of view, the construction of Imaginary and Symbolic defences erected to ward off an encounter with the Real. Fowles then claims that the Nemo is "both the passive horror of this condition and the active source of the energy needed to remedy it" (Fowles, *The Aristos* 57). In other words, the Imaginary and Symbolic registers of subjectivity function simultaneously as a screen against the Real and as formations propelled by it.

In Lacanian terms, Nemo may thus be understood as the subject's encounter with the Real – an experience of void and anxiety that threatens subjectivity while paradoxically triggering the Imaginary and Symbolic structures through which the subject seeks to endure.

Fowles on Lacan's Obscurity and a Lacanian Insight on Fowles's Obscurity

Fowles admitted to reading Lacan's works but was frustrated due to their obscurity. In an interview with Carlin Romano in 1986, Fowles mentions, "I've tried to read him [Derrida] and Lacan. You know, when you have to read a page three times even to begin to understand what it means…It's sad in a way, being so obscure." Then he adds, "Lacan, I think, was the last philosopher I read, about a year ago. I really gave up. It's all these neologisms. I wouldn't mind if they published a long explanatory glossary in the back" (Romano 139). He reiterated his position in other interviews as well, typically grouping Lacan with Derrida and Barthes. In an interview with Susana Onega, Fowles added that "I have read quite a lot of them on deconstruction and post-structuralism and all the rest of it. I really do not understand what it is all about. I speak French and I read French quite well but I am afraid most of it is absolutely over my head." He adds, "In *Mantissa* I was making fun of it, rather crude fun in places. But I was really expressing the old English view that most of French intellectual

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