

J. A. Wainwright

**The Illusion of "Things as they are":  
*The Magus* versus *The Magus A Revised Version***

"I do not ask you to believe.  
All I ask you is to pretend to  
believe. It will be easier."

Conchis to Nicholas in  
*The Magus A Revised Version*

One of the reasons we read certain prose fiction is because of the mimetic illusion it provides. There is prose fiction, of course, the *nouveau roman* one chief example, in which time and event, setting and dialogue, among other things, are out of joint. In such texts "Literal permutations supersede referential logic,"<sup>1</sup> and with the destruction of the mimetic illusion nothing is certain for the reader. However, there are many works which rest upon a bedrock of dependable facts in the fiction. Karlheinz Stierle writes, "In order to apprehend fiction, the reader first has to receive it as mimesis...."<sup>2</sup> If the reader must not focus only on the mimetic aspects of the text, Stierle insists that "The reading of fiction in terms of mimetic illusion is an elementary form of reception that has a relative right of its own":

There is a form of reception with regard to fictional texts that one could call quasi-pragmatic. In quasi-pragmatic reception the boundaries of the fictional text are transcended through an illusion created by the reader himself. This illusion may be compared to pragmatic reception which is always overstepping the boundaries of the text in an attempt to fill the gap between word and world. In quasi-pragmatic reception fiction is removed from its verbal base without, however, having a position in the actual reader's field of action beyond the text.<sup>3</sup>

When the sole function of literature is to create an illusory reality then theoretical response (interpretation and meaning) is not required: "Only illusion that is sustained by fiction can turn into aesthetic experience that lasts and does not spend itself with illusion"<sup>4</sup> (as the

popular novel spends itself, for example). But Stierle's position posits, for certain texts at least, a mimetic illusion and a quasi-pragmatic reception that precede pragmatic reception and movement beyond textual boundaries.

There is a contrast between real life and the reality within a work of fiction which strengthens the mimetic illusion and renders it unique when the reader encounters the fixed nature of what happened in the text. Outside the text the reader only *perceives* what happened in his own life. And perception is relative, dependent on character, memory, experience itself. The mind and emotions act as filters, and thus the past is a distilled version of something (an 'actual' past) that can never be apprehended. On the other hand, what took place in the text (this is opposed to any interpretation by a fictional character of what happened) cannot be filtered by the reader's personal vision. The fixing of events, of verbal exchanges, of all mimetic illusion, is aided by the overwhelming use of past-tense narration in mimetic fiction. "He said '....'" means just that — we are not meant to doubt that a character said what he said, even though we debate the meaning of his words. We can be sure that he spoke and there is no distilled version of what he said. I would suggest that this certainty on the part of the reader is precisely what attracts and holds one to mimetic fiction. There are doubts and plenty of them when interpretation and meaning rear their necessary heads, but meanwhile, unlike the reader's response to life itself, response to the text is *not* founded securely on "the unreality...a fairy's wing"<sup>5</sup>; it is founded rather on a reality within a particular fiction that never shifts or changes with time or second readings or whatever literary conventions are in vogue. Any alteration of a given text is not a change but an invention of something new. Such invention involves at least the implied destruction of a text as original, as well as the explicit construction of another. When destruction is applied from without rather than existing as part of the text itself (as in the *nouveau roman*, for example), the result is the presence of two distinct texts set in palimpsest form in which the old and the new are equally visible.

This brings us to the question of revision, not of a work in progress, but of a previously-published work. I would argue that publication of a mimetic text, together with reception of it, means that any alteration of the mimetic structure involves an attempt to annul an original presentation and fixed apprehension of reality. But I would also suggest that annulment ('revision' is a misleading term) is theoretical only — an author can make over a published text, but what he in essence does is to create a second text that may closely resemble but is *not* the first. What he is attempting to do, whether it is because he grew tired of his first effort, or felt that certain details rang false, or feels that no

mimetic illusion exists except as words that are symbols for interpretation and meaning, has nothing to do with the quasi-pragmatic reception of the original text by the reader.

Perhaps one of the most salient illustrations of this theoretical annulment of a published work is John Fowles' 1977 revision of his *The Magus* (1966).<sup>6</sup> An examination of Fowles' attitude towards fiction, his own fiction in particular, of details of two books called *The Magus*, and of critical response to Fowles' efforts reveals much that readers of mimetic fiction should consider. Rather significant questions are raised by such an examination. Among them: Do fictional worlds exist at all, or are they but transitory imaginings subject to change at an author's discretion? Is to believe implicitly in "He said '....'" to be a pawn in a game, the author's theory game? Not least, if mimetic illusion is itself illusory, why not abandon the pretence of mimesis altogether?

Fowles has, apparently, a particular attitude towards the cosmos and, as a result, towards the literary fiction within it that certainly clashes with what I have been saying about reader response to the illusion of reality in fiction. Robert L. Nadeau asserts Fowles' awareness of what is called in scientific circles "the new physics." Nadeau emphasizes "Newton's conception of the natural law as a transcendent absolute, or as having real existence outside the world of change....":<sup>7</sup>

Since Newtonian physics left the Western conception of things, or substances, intact, it posed no threat to the view of human identity as a fixed and immutable entity.... In the new physics, space and time become space-time, correlative aspects of one unified process, and any assertions made about the nature of that process are 'relative' and depend upon the position of the observer.... space-time must be viewed as 'forms of thought' or aspects of the language system that have existence only in the mind of the observer.<sup>8</sup>

The application of the new physics to mimetic prose fiction creates problems for the reader. First of all, I will assume that space-time includes such things as action (including articulation) and event, regardless of possibilities for their interpretation and meaning. Therefore, in space-time, "He said '....'" is an aspect of the language system that is not communally apprehended as a fact in a fiction. It is not, above all, "a fixed and immutable entity," but exists only as a potentially infinite number of points of view and, as we shall see, is without significance in and of itself.

Fowles, as he reveals in his *The Aristos*, believes in a "relativity reality"<sup>9</sup> in which matter never disappears but is simply metamorphosed. Nadeau quotes a quantum theorist to clarify Fowles' position:

One is led to a new notion of unbroken wholeness which denies the classical idea of analyzability of the world into separately and independently existing parts: we have reversed the usual classical notion that the independent 'elementary parts' of the world are the fundamental reality....<sup>10</sup>

Given his view of a world of relatives, we should not be surprised at the several endings Fowles provides for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, nor at the existence of two versions of *The Magus*. He would insist, it seems, that the several endings are part of an "unbroken wholeness" (there is no such thing, anyway, as an ending) in space-time, just as he would insist that *The Magus* revised (1977) is simply *The Magus* (1966) viewed from a different position and vice-versa. According to Fowles' logic, the original *The Magus* (1966) itself offers but another view of a fictional world, the fundamental reality of which is not made up of a collection of "elementary parts" provided in 1966. In other words, there is no original version of this novel (nor of any novel), there are just metamorphosed versions of it.

Those who have reviewed or written critical articles on the revised *The Magus* do not necessarily support Fowles' relativity theory, but because they view the 1966 and 1977 editions as versions of the same thing, these critics do not raise any questions about the nature and quality of mimesis in Fowles' fiction. Thus Nadeau writes that the differences between the 1966 and 1977 texts "are not...substantial" and that many of the changes in wording "simply make explicit what was implicit in the first version."<sup>11</sup> Michael Boccia asserts that "the most important aspects of the novel appear to be *expanded*"<sup>12</sup>; obviously, alterations which produce expansion are themselves secondary to the supposed result. Fowles himself claims in his introduction to the revised version that he has not provided "in a major thematic or narrative sense, a fresh version of *The Magus*, it is rather more [that] a number of scenes have been largely rewritten and one or two new ones invented."<sup>13</sup> Note the subjection of "scenes" ("elementary parts") to "[no] fresh version" ("unbroken wholeness") and the basic philosophy that the end justifies the means in prose fiction.

One wonders if it is possible in the new 'phyction' to rewrite anything when there is no original but only relative vision. One might also ask why Fowles would stop at a single revision within the unbroken wholeness. Even if no other published revision is offered, it is the ever-present potential for another and yet another that creates problems and even chaos in the reader's perception of fiction as mimetic. If the emphasis is on the certainty that "nothing is certain,"<sup>14</sup> what happens to "explicit and implicit" meanings, to "thematic sense," to

"the most important aspects of the novel" when its elementary parts which are both word and world cannot be responded to by the reader in terms of mimetic illusion? If such illusion must be sustained by fiction, as Stierle says, the illusion must do some sustaining of its own.

In Fowles' theory, then, the original version of *The Magus* (1966) is a version which is not in conflict with another version published in 1977. More important, this theory suggests that the whole question of 'versions' is a red herring when it comes to the books themselves (in my possession a 617-page hardcover novel and a 656-page hardcover novel). Thus in the 1977 publication, under the heading 'Books By The Same Author,' there is no mention of a *The Magus* published in 1966. How better to eradicate distinctions and to emphasize that the 1977 book is nothing new but more of the same?

In Conchis' domaine, Nicholas is forced to consider and reconsider his fundamental perceptions of reality. The story is told by Nicholas looking back on his Phraxos experience and its consequences, but with very little if any commentary on the experience as it unfolds that stems from what he has learned. Fowles' narrative method involves the reader in Nicholas' perception of himself and others and causes the reader to question the fundamental perceptions of reality *as they exist in the domaine*, that is, as they exist in the fictional world. Fowles can control the reader's response, and does so, by forcing him to follow, with Nicholas, the labyrinths of Bourani. It is certainly possible to surmise that because of the nature of the story *he* is telling, Fowles is suggesting that the reader be careful about taking reality and his own ego-centered version of it for granted. However, if Fowles is so suggesting, he is doing so through the age-old method of fictional and mimetic example: 'my character behaves this way and look what happens to him, so be careful!' Reader response to *The Magus* (either version) is based on authorial construction of a fictional world that makes sense, even if what happens within that world does not. If the question 'What is truth' is asked in many guises many times within the domaine, if the illusions of Bourani shake profoundly Nicholas' perception of Phraxos and, indeed, of his whole world, certain apprehensions of that world remain unshakeable for the reader. The existence of the Revision, however, must prompt the reader to consider not only the illusions of Bourani and the problems they offer Nicholas, not only what interpretations and meaning may be applied to and extracted from the novel's interior life, but also — whether Fowles intends it as a sideshow or not: " 'you too now begin to be a magician' " (*O*, 509, *R*, 552) — the implications of the illusion of the illusion of the text itself.

For almost the first third of each edition the action Nicholas describes is virtually the same. That is, nobody, including Nicholas him-

self, does anything in the Original that is not replicated in the Revision, unless the actual way in which the 'doing' is described, slightly altered, rules out absolute replication and results in what Boccia might refer to as 'expanded replication.' Thus in the Original Nicholas applies for a position at an East Anglia school and is "interviewed" (*O*, 6); in the Revision he applies to this same school and is "cursorily scrutinized" (*R*, 18). Certainly the latter description of what happens to Nicholas at his interview is more complex than the former because it suggests a person (interviewer) who looks him over. This is an example of Fowles making explicit what was implicit and involves an expansion, however slight, of the original text. But in the same section of the novels Nicholas says that the temper of his father was that of a "violent red dog" (*O*, 3) and a "red dog" (*R*, 15). Here the explicit-implicit flow has been reversed, and a shrinking of the original text occurs. The changes made in the first two-and-one-half chapters of each edition involve elementary parts that are so small and independent of one another that they do not threaten the theory of "unbroken wholeness," nor do they bring into play the question of the illusion of the text itself. Perhaps the best way to explain the reader's ability to handle the changes, without his wondering about the nature of the illusion of the text, is to suggest that the reader can accept that Nicholas could say the same thing about an interview or about his father in a slightly different fashion almost simultaneously in his mind. There could be a choice for Nicholas as to whether to say "interviewed" or "cursorily scrutinized," but the results make no difference to him and, therefore, to the reader who is apprehending him before attempting to fill in the gap between word and world.

But what happens to 'expanded replication' when dialogue between characters is not only altered but is *completely* new? Again, it seems to me that the distinction between major and minor differences in the texts has to do, first, with the effect of dialogue on characters themselves (*their* quasi-pragmatic and then pragmatic reception of the world). When Alison, bathed and dressed to go to a party with Nicholas, asks, "Je vous plait?" (*O*, 14) or "I pass?" (*R*, 25), these elementary parts add up to the same thing. Nicholas does not respond any differently to the flat English comment or to the coy French one. "Flat" and "coy" involve my interpretation of Alison's words, but that is another thing altogether from my apprehension of Nicholas' reception (unchanged from text to text) of her words. Therefore, I can agree with Fowles' insistence here that an "unbroken wholeness" is not violated. However, the relationship between reader-author-text soon becomes more complicated.

On the beach near Bourani, Nicholas discovers some marked quotations from Ezra Pound, but more has been pointed out to him in the Revision than in the Original. In addition to the lines offered in the Original, he reads "Mock not the flood of stars, the thing's to be," as well as the words about Prosperina, Tiresias, and "Knowledge the shade of a shade" (*R*, 69-70). Nicholas is reporting words here, just as he did "interviewed" and "cursorily scrutinized," *but* he is also responding to the words from Pound, trying to fit them into his scheme of things as he has not done previously with other words about his father and the interview. The reader, as a result, before he begins to deal with the Pound words as symbols within the fictional world, realizes that Nicholas senses they are symbols for him. Expansion, yes, because the lines from the poetry simply follow one another in Pound, but the effect on Nicholas is no longer the same because the implications of the words are no longer the same; these added elementary parts do bring about a shift in response by the fictional protagonist and, therefore, a shift in the reader's apprehension of him.

I do not wish to attempt a line-by-line comparison/contrast of the original and revised editions of *The Magus* in order to emphasize that the reader pays a tremendous price when he is forced to realize the illusion of the illusion of the text and runs headlong into the results of an insistence that the past can be repeated from a different point of view or, more exactly, *because* of a different point of view. It is enough in this essay to reveal the absolute distinction between certain elementary parts of each edition of *The Magus*, distinctions which yield two independent fictional worlds or mimetic illusions and create a great problem about the emergence of aesthetic experience from words and worlds which collide with rather than complement one another. The character and role of Lily-Julie in each text, particularly as she is introduced to Nicholas, demand consideration.

The original edition of *The Magus* relies heavily on the mystery of Lily for its impact. She is a figure of chameleon-like quality who stays for a considerable time in her Edwardian role (Is it a role? Both Nicholas and the reader wonder), and who, when she drops the historical trappings to become a modern woman, bemuses Nicholas with her provocative behaviour; thus she appears to be both naive and wily and cannot be pinned down. Lily participates in Nicholas' reality and in the myth that is presented to him. One moment she is at dinner with him and Conchis (where Nicholas can, for just a moment, feel sure she is an "actress"), and the next she is clad in a chiton, carrying a bow — Artemis-Diana holding the hand of her brother Apollo. This sudden transformation upsets Nicholas' rational perception of reality, and he never again feels that he is on completely firm ground with Lily. In his

reaction to the myth-scene in both editions, Nicholas feels jealous of poachers in his "territory" and that what he has seen has been "an attempt at the sort of scandalous evocation mentioned in *Le Masque Francais*" (O, 176, R, 183). But, it is only in the Original that he describes the experience as having "mystical" and "spiritualistic significance" (O, 196). In the Revision there is no mention of myth or spirit; Lily stands beside Nicholas to watch the unfolding of events, and though (as in the Original) she calls Apollo her "brother" she is obviously not part of the performance and is all the more reassuring for that. And it *is* a performance, not a disturbing evocation of myth (or even, frighteningly, the *reality* of myth), in the Revision because Nicholas hears sounds below him of the mechanics of the situation. As for Conchis in all this, in the Original he is elusive, cloaking his response to Nicholas in words that are anything but clear or explanatory: "I am rich in many things, Nicholas....Richer in forgotten powers. In strange desires" (O, 177). Everything is disguised, or a metaphor, or both, in order to confuse, frighten, and attract the prey. However, the revised Conchis has the "eyes of a scientist checking the results of an experiment," and he brings Nicholas into the scheme of the domaine, rather than keep him at a distance, when he says, "Why everything is, including you, including me, and all the gods, is a matter of hazard. Nothing else. Pure hazard" (R, 185-186). Hazard, yes; but previously Conchis has emphasized to Nicholas (in both editions), "You are meant to do as you choose" (O, 158, R, 166).

Thus, when Nicholas next meets Lily in the Revision he remembers to "venture" and is aggressive with her, certain he can pin her down. He does not want to consider simply the "charming trouble" (O, 191) she has with her wind-blown hair, but "to shake her hard" (R, 194). He chases her with such words as "script" and "nonsense" and feels confident that he has "provoked...a look out of her real self" (R, 197). However, in the Original, in contrast, Nicholas knows Lily is "not unmasking at all," and he feels "exasperated, fooled," at the mercy of her extreme changes in mood.

Aside from the revised Lily reciting nine lines from *The Tempest* (R) to Nicholas as opposed to a twenty-line nursery rhyme (O), aside from a thinly-smiling Nicholas as opposed to a laughing one, and aside from slightly-altered as well as entirely different exchanges between Nicholas and Lily-Julie about who they are and where they've come from (including, in the Original, mention of Alison: "What is an air hostess" — 201), Fowles introduces elementary parts into the Revision that offer no comparison with, only a contrast to the 1966 edition. Revised Lily begins to drop her mask; she surrenders to Nicholas, and he feels through his probing and choosing that he has achieved a "vic-



tory." On the other hand, there is only a "truce" achieved with the original Lily, who is still mysterious in her role and confused rather than convincing as she attempts to come out of the masque. Nicholas in the Revision presses forward into the "legendary maze," aware there is still mystery but "equipped to exorcize [it]" (R, 210). He wants, here, to follow hazard: "It was always to be this, and something in me had always known it" (R, 210). He wants to "venture" and not depend on chance to find him. *This* Nicholas' Lily tells him her name is Julie Holmes and insists that she is not at all sure about the maze. But the original Lily stays within the role while giving signs she would like to shed it. She won't divulge anything about herself, but does admit she is supposed to cause Nicholas to fall in love with her; also she remains very attached to and dependent upon Conchis, afraid to betray him. The self-announced Julie, however, talks freely about "Maurice": "We've been told a lot more about what he's trying to do. But it may only be more lies" (R, 213). She also implies that Nicholas may be a "plant" to dupe her and her sister June, and admits her attraction to Nicholas. He, meanwhile, feels confident Julie is now on his side, especially because of his sexual powers—their kiss confirms it for him ("But her eyes came up again, and I knew they were for me alone"—R, 219). The mystery of Lily-Julie in the Revision is now over; she is real enough for Nicholas, and it is significant that from this point on she will be 'explained' by Conchis in real enough psychiatric terms. Julie has only been playing Lily, playing "dead" because, as she says "Perhaps I have no choice" (R, 196). In the Original, though, Lily announces "I am dead" (O, 202) and is not nearly so clearly categorized by Nicholas, Conchis, or the reader.

Certainly the emphasis in the revision is on Julie's schizophrenia and on what Conchis calls the "situational therapy" he has arranged for her at Bourani. The explanations of Julie's condition are medical, and for a long time Nicholas will have nothing else to go on in his search for the heart of the labyrinth. Although he constantly doubts Conchis and Julie, the alternative to schizophrenia is neither frightening nor mysterious to him, though annoying and sometimes shocking: "I felt humiliated and at the same time fascinated.... I could not believe that the girl I had just left suffered from some deep mental flaw. A liar, yes; but not a celebrated lunatic" (R, 225). In the Original the schizophrenia is mentioned, but Nicholas receives no book on the subject, nor is he told anything about situational therapy. Altogether there remains an air of the unexplained about Lily and the domaine, but Nicholas can relate with at least one foot on the ground to the scientist and his "experiment" because things seem to exist in categories of 'either...or':

I had the familiar feeling that came in conversation at Bourani, of not knowing quite what statements applied to — in this case whether to the assumption that “Lily” really was a schizophrenic or to the assumption that of course I knew that her ‘schizophrenia’ was simply a new hiding-place in the masque. (R, 226)

These words of Nicholas from the Revision are the same in the original with two exceptions. First, in the original Lily has not yet become Julie, and so the Edwardian woman still remains with all of Nicholas’ wonderment intact; therefore, there are no inverted commas around her name. Second, Fowles has removed the key phrase “of ambiguity” (O, 214) from the revision, which appears in the Original immediately following “at Bourani.” This *ambiguity* emphasizes Nicholas’ entire response to a masque without medical explanations—Conchis has just referred to “‘our little — amusements here’ ” (O, 214). For the Nicholas of the Revision, if Julie is not schizophrenic then she *is* Julie who has passionately kissed and surrendered to him. In the Original, if she is not schizophrenic then who/what is Lily?

Fowles reveals to the reader of the Original the implications of Lily to Nicholas when he meets Alison on Mount Parnassus. After Alison has made love to him in the mountain hut he watches her sleeping, “Young and ancient; innocent and corrupt; in every woman, a mystery” (O, 250). Such a view of woman and muse (The Parnassian connection cannot be overlooked) is altered in the revision as “all women” replaces “a mystery.” In the Revision, then, Nicholas can define or include his other woman/muse in a view of Alison. In the Original he is not defining, but responding to Alison in terms of the Lily who awaits him at Bourani.

Whether or not he knows Julie, the revised Nicholas assumes that he does, and this is confirmed by their “passionate” embrace when they next meet: “‘This is real. Whatever else is unreal’ ” (R, 289). But for the original Nicholas, Edwardian Lily still tantalizes and evades, “like a heroine in Chekhov, unpredictable, shifting, always prey to something beyond the words and moods of the apparent situation” (O, 271). What follows in the Revision is Julie acting the schizophrenic (telling “Dr.” Conchis that she hates him) and giving Nicholas “one shadow of a wink...[that] made all...deceptions hollow—and intolerable; it also allowed [him] to deceive in return” (R, 293). While Conchis relates the amazing story of Siedevarre (identical in each edition), Nicholas and Julie play footsie under the table. Thus, though Nicholas realizes “Every truth in his [Conchis’] world was a sort of lie; and every lie a sort of truth” (R, 294), he is “content to wait” and, with Julie, trust the situation will work out satisfactorily. In the Original, without Julie’s overt alliance, the truth and lie reversal “slashe[s] off [the] cautious

belief" Nicholas can have in anything tangible. The conclusions the two Nicholas's reach are quite different.

Nicholas asks Conchis in both the original and revised editions, "No illustrations to the text tonight?" and Conchis' reply is unchanged: "This is the illustration [that is, Siedevarre]. Things as they are. In my small domaine." (*O*, 292, *R*, 312). The original Nicholas, agreeing with the reply, says, "The masque," and Conchis tells him, "The masque is a metaphor.... You are never quite sure whether you are my guest or my victim. You are neither. You are something else.... What it is has no name" (*O*, 292). There is no mention in the Revision, at this point, of masque or metaphor. Nicholas feels that Conchis' domaine holds "a lot more mystification than mysticism, and one sure feature of 'things' there was that they were not what they seemed. He might have his profound side, but another was that of a cunning old charlatan" (*R*, 312). In each edition Nicholas has many things to learn, but in the Original learning not to depend on what seems real is not one of them. Anubis comes for Lily (now revealed as 'Rose') because she calls him, whereas Julie is picked up by "a man in a white medical coat" (*R*, 320). Anubis frightens Nicholas; in the maze, as he sees himself as Theseus on the way to the centre and the minotaur, "Lily [is] the strongest but not the only element" (*O*, 303), and Nicholas continues to "wonder, to waver." However, when the medical man defiles Nicholas by spitting on him, he feels only that he can trap and destroy Conchis the minotaur and have "the final prize" (*R*, 322).

The presentation of Lily-Julie in each text contains, of course, the sexual exchanges between her and Nicholas. I leave a detailed analysis of Fowles' "expansion" of the original edition along sexual lines to others; however, it is obvious that Nicholas' failure in the Original to seduce Julie, the frustration he feels as a result, and the emphasis throughout this text on unachieved intercourse, reveal that Nicholas can learn what he must without sexual climax and even, especially, because there is no sexual climax allowed. To assert that all this is identical to, or just another view of, his having orgasm with her (with the basic emphasis that he learns *despite* achieving his most-sought desire) is to promulgate the notion that mimetic illusion is only what an author wants it to be because means are subservient to ends. The mystery of Julie cannot be penetrated by Nicholas in the Original most of all because he cannot penetrate her sexually; she is no ordinary woman. What he runs up against in the "disintoxication" in the Revision is no mystery, but the hard, cold fact that his apparent sexual mastery of Julie ("she was defenceless...completely at my mercy"—*R*, 486) does not bind her to him.

*The Magus A Revised Version* (1977) is "a fresh version" of *The Magus* (1966), a palimpsest that does not hide the distinct mimetic illusion of the Original but seeks to do so. What emerges from the Revision is an intrinsic nihilism that threatens all mimesis in the stories of Nicholas Urfe; mimetic illusion, as is it presented in each edition, while replete with possibilities for interpretation and meaning, is symbolic only and, of itself, need signify nothing certain for the reader. With the two editions of *The Magus* Fowles has the reader enter a space-time domaine in which he learns, or is meant to learn, that his old, usual attitudes towards mimetic fiction are inadequate and that there can be no quasi-pragmatic reception of Fowles' novel(s). Without saying so directly, Fowles insists that the reader respond to his fictional world(s) entirely in terms of his intentions for them, that is, entirely in terms of a Fowles' theory of fiction. Thus mimetic illusion is itself an illusion; there is only "a conceptual configuration without any [certain] referential status."<sup>15</sup> This, it seems to me, contradicts the basic tenet offered to Nicholas and to the reader in both editions: " 'That it's also how, not why.' "<sup>16</sup>

At one point in the Revision Conchis says to Nicholas, "I do not object to the principles of fiction. Simply that in print, in books, they remain mere principles" (*R*, 231). He means that in the "god-game" the principles cease to be mere propositions or internal convictions and are transformed into event, are 'lived out.' For Fowles, the principle that "nothing is certain" remained an untried, untranslated conviction as long as it was expressed only in the fiction of *The Magus* (1966). But what if the fiction about uncertainty could itself be shown to be an uncertainty? Then the magus who matters is no longer Conchis but Fowles himself. Once another *The Magus* is conceived it can take any form under the magician's sun and have the same results. Indeed, it *does*. However, if nothing is certain except the theory of unbroken wholeness and the identity of the true magus, the Revision has no more to offer than does the Original it seeks to annul while pretending to complement it as another version of itself. Ultimately and ironically, what the Revision reveals is that the unique mimetic illusion of the Original cannot be denied.

## NOTES

1. Vicki Mistacco, "Reading Nouveaux Romans." in *The Reader in the Text* edited by Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 377.
2. Karlheinz Stierle, "The Reading of Fictional Texts," in *The Reader in the Text*, p. 92.
3. Stierle, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
4. Stierle, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
5. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons 1925), p. 119.
6. John Fowles, *The Magus* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966) and John Fowles, *The Magus A Revised Version* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977).
7. Robert L. Nadeau, "Fowles and Physics: A Study of *The Magus A Revised Version*," in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume Eight, Number 2, 1980-81, p. 261.
8. Nadeau, *op. cit.*, p. 262.
9. John Fowles, *The Aristos* (London: Pan Books Ltd. 1968), p. 42.
10. Nadeau, *op. cit.*, p. 266.
11. Nadeau, *op. cit.*, p. 267.
12. Michael Boccia, "'Visions and Revisions': John Fowles New Version of *The Magus*," in *Journal of Modern Literature*, Volume Eight, Number 2, 1980-81, p. 236.
13. John Fowles, *The Magus A Revised Version*, p. 5.
14. Fowles, *The Magus A Revised Version*, p. 339. To make things clear in my discussion of the text(s) of *The Magus* I will refer to the 1966 edition as the "Original" and the 1977 edition as the "Revision." All future page references will appear in parentheses immediately following the quotation, and the Original and the Revision will be designated as "O" and "R" respectively.
15. Stierle, *op. cit.*, p. 104. Fowles, like Conchis, asserts that "'There is no place for limits in the meta-theatre.'" The reader, like Nicholas, could well reply "'Then you shouldn't involve ordinary human beings in it'" (R, 406).
16. Fowles, *The Magus A Revised Version*, p. 487. Julie says this to Nicholas after they have made love. In the Original (159) and the Revision (167), in a much earlier scene, Conchis says to Nicholas, "'You are beginning to understand why. Not how.'"