An illustration of Jung's complex of the shadow in Fowles's *The Magus*

Ioana Munteanu
University of Piteşti

Abstract:

Our paper aims at exploring the complex of the shadow, of the ego as the sum of the superficial and abyssal egos of the individual, caught in the trap of a perpetual perilous through his own unconscious – a central leitmotif in Fowles's work.

Nicholas Urfe's shadow is connected with love, with the necessity to identify him with his feminine counterpart represented by the double Lily-Julie. Fowles is clearly influenced by Jung's theories about the unconscious and illustrates them in the literary world he creates.

Key words: shadow, double, archetype, consciousness.

According to Jung's theories about the human psyche, the shadow is a complex of the unconscious, defined as the suppressed and repressed aspects of the conscious self. There are constructive and destructive types of shadow. The destructive types of shadow are represented by everything that the conscious person does not want to acknowledge within himself/herself (for example, someone who is violent has a gentle shadow). The constructive types of shadow may be represented by hidden positive influences. If the shadow material is not incorporated into conscious awareness, one projects the attributes of the shadow on others. In dreams, the shadow often appears as a dark figure of the same gender as the dreamer. According to Jung, a person deals with the reality of the shadow in four ways: denial, projection, integration or transmutation (Jung, 1933, pp.200-225). We will see how Nicholas switches from denial to projection.

The story presented in *The Magus* was inspired by Fowles's period of teaching in Greece and the protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, is of the same age and temperament as the writer at the time of the writing. An examination of the corpus reveals a maturing hero as well as a maturing writer.

Nicholas is twenty-five, educated at Oxford, attracted to existentialism and bored with life. He is the typical Fowlesian protagonist, well born and bred, without aims and prepared for the quest. Not being satisfied with his teaching career in England, he seizes the opportunity to teach in Greece. His unconscious desire is for a new land, a new race and a new language which the quest will provide.

Before leaving he meets Alison, who will become the most important woman in his life, although it takes many pages and much questing through the labyrinth of self-knowledge on Phraxos for Nicholas to realize this. Alison, as the intuitive female, the sensitive side Nicholas needs to achieve wholeness, recognizes the importance of their relationship from the beginning, while Nicholas, representing reason, does not.

In analysing the elements of the quest that bring Nicholas to an understanding and acceptance of the sensitive, feeling side of him, which allows him to experience love, one can chart the pattern of the quest, which Fowles presents in variations in all his fiction.

On Phraxos, Nicholas responds to the call to adventure, embodied in the voice of a girl, the song of a bird, and some lines of a poetry, especially four lines from T.S. Elliot: *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* (Fowles, 1991, 226). These lines state the mystery of the journey that waits for him: to quest in the outer world so as to come back within himself with understanding.

Finally, it is the acceptance that motivates all of Fowles' wanderers, beginning with Nicholas. Crossing the threshold of beyond the waiting room to the domain of myth at Bourani, Nicholas meets Conchis, his guide through the quest. Under Conchis' tutelage, Nicholas's *discoveries* begin, he understands that something significant is about to happen, something that is somehow linked to Alison and that restores in him the desire to live.

BDD-A20467 © 2009 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:54 UTC)

Conchis guides Nicholas through a series of experiences meant to teach and test him. In some of these experiences Nicholas is merely an observer, in others he has an active, frightening role, and others are described to him by Conchis. He wants to discover more and more, allowing himself to be led deeper and deeper into the mysteries. These culminate in the trial scene, during which Nicholas is examined, his personality is dissected, his person humiliated. Finally, his ability to choose is put to the test. Wishing to punish Lily/Julie, the personification of the woman for whom Nicholas romantically and unrealistically longs, he is given the opportunity to face her by himself.

The shadow archetype is included in the novel in the necessity to identify Nicholas with his feminine counterpart represented by the double Lily-Julie. This procedure actually points out to their spiritual life and represents their necessity to challenge life, which sets against them problems hard to overcome, mainly consisting in moral problems.

Nicholas cannot adapt to life in England and his physical survival consisting in food, warmth and protection does not have a real basis. Therefore, his option for Greece and the island of Phraxos becomes a necessity. However, what life has prepared for him there is in fact a God game, in which he plays the Guinea pig part.

Greece, with its associations of myth and archetypes frightens him but it also represents the encounter with the good and the evocation of the real human condition that to him is the shadow.

When the ultimate Mediterranean fell on the world around me, I could see it was supremely beautiful, but when it touched me I felt it was hostile. It seemed to corrode, not cleanse. It was like being at the beginning of an interrogation under arch lights…already, my old self began to know that it wouldn't be able to hold out. It was partly the terror, the stripping-to-essentials of love (Fowles, 1991, 49).

Moreover, his shadow also includes complexes connected with love, as he realizes that Alison is not his other. For Nicholas his departure is somehow a means to avoid his shadowy side, but he cannot avoid his destiny as love is represented in this new stage of his life by the "double", by the twin sisters Lily and Rose. His conceptions are even more shattered.

The "double" phenomenon has ramifications in all the mythologies and its more concrete form of appearance is the shadow, because the primitive man perceived the double as a shadow, the spiritual double of his body. On the island, Nicholas comes in contact with the notion of twins, which he understands only when the girls become jealous of one another. Not only that his incapacity to choose one of them does lead to the development of a "brother complex" in the twins, but also Nicholas himself develops a psychic complex rivalling with the initial pattern of love for a woman, July. When one's brother becomes a rival in love, feelings of hatred develop and even the desire to destroy or even murder the double (See Rank, Otto, *Dublul Don Juan*, Institutul European, Iași, 1997).

The brother theme does not completely exhaust the problem of the double, as the former does not represent the source of the double but only Nicholas's subjective reflection of his denied complexes which become his shadow. The physical disagreement is the projection of his inner chaos. In spite of his fear of not being able to adapt, Nicholas takes the challenge of going to the island considered by the author an island of self: *The lizard, the monkey, the man and the artist represent the stages of man's evolution and suggest unpleasant depths that Nicholas must confront* (Fowles, 1991, 81).

It is Conchis, the Godfather of the island, who stages up all the acts Nicholas will perform, thus allowing him to tidy up the chaos of his feelings. The veil that Nicholas wants to put between his life in England and Greece must be eliminated by the force of his unconscious: therefore he accomplishes an extraordinary voyage into the human unconscious:

The masque…the masque: it fascinated me and irritated me, like an obscure poem…he must want me to flounder, flounder indeed, since the curious books and objects he put in my way, Lily herself, and now the myth figures in the night, with all their abnormal undertones had to be seen as a book, and I couldn't pretend that it had not sunk home (Fowles, 1991, 372).

BDD-A20467 © 2009 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:54 UTC)

This masque which hides the undesired part of Nicholas's existence makes him penetrate into a realm considered as a vacation from his stringent problems represented by his new life, an elimination of the blurring makeshifts in order to discover his soul. However, this trial induced to his unconscious by Conchis determines him to drop his masque and presents him nearly hysterical, maddened by his falling defences against the chaos of appearances:

For weeks I had had a sense of being taken apart, disconnected from a previous self…and now it was like lying on a workshop bench, a litter of parts…and not quite being sure how to put oneself together again. (Fowles, 1991, 386)

Nicholas becomes a case in a game with therapeutic intentions. The luxurious minutiae of the masque are meant to shed light on various aspects of the psychiatric study: Nicholas's deformed sexuality, the biographies that line Conchis's shelves betokening his interests in their lives, the portrait of Conchis's mother that expresses a filial bond, a sense of family which Nicholas has never known. All this affects Nicholas in different ways.

What Nicholas has to learn from analysing this masque is that he is living an unauthentic life and that the things against which he has to revolt are those inherited from his father: discipline, responsibility, tradition and the English middle class *born with masks and bred to lie* (Fowles, 1991, 372).

When he feels the danger of being discovered by Alison, he becomes untrue again in his revolt against untruth. The only thing he is able to do in front of his revelation is to reject Alison because she does not harmonise with the role he has cast for himself.

In his study, Conchis insists that Nicholas should be the masque, meaning that it is up to him whether to play or not. When Nicholas banishes himself from what he sees as "mass-produced middle-class England", Conchis brings Lily Montgomery as a catalyst. Lily penetrates the microcosm made up by Alison but at a certain moment Nicholas is told that she died. However, there is always a balance, as the dead live through love. The masque could have an end, but Lily converts the masque of the schizophrenic force to play. The explanation Lily gives to Nicholas is nothing else but his own split personality, the "un-Nicholas". The teacher does not catch this meaning because the girl is his ideal woman.

Julie Holmer, the actress, signifies everything that Alison cannot be for Nicholas. When July and Julie are together for a day, Nicholas believes he made progress with the mysterious lady: "the fate" is that one that comes to re-establish his lack of real identity. Alison intrudes in the atmosphere, through a telegram and he has in front of his eyes Anubis, the Egyptian god of the tombs and the one who weighed hearts.

Nicholas's masque also covers the love-sex relation. Women are created either to be loved, or to be used. In Nick's relation with Alison, the latter is to be used. He does not understand that his values are falsely built and that his masque is the projection of his own bad attitudes. Nicholas's unhealthy attitude toward women and sex remains only one part of what Conchis assumes to be Nicholas's collector consciousness. A collector categorises and dehumanizes life and people. As we have seen, Conchis uses the twin sisters to personify Nicholas's tendency to categorise. Nicholas is disturbed that Alison does not slip without a fight into the role he casts for her: *she stood there in her white dress, small, innocent-corrupt, coarse-fine, an expert novice* (Fowles, 1991, 28).

At the trial, it is suggested to Nicholas that inside an empty coffin box resides the goddess Ashtaroth, who is Ishtar in Babylonia, Astarte in Greece and Ashtareth to the Jews. She is also related to Isis, Aphrodite and Demeter and is the goddess of love, beauty, motherhood, war, virginity and prostitution. The trial doctors say that in her resides the essence of a real woman like Alison.

Conchis offers the DeDeukans story as a parable of the consequences of collector consciousness. DeDeukans has *devoted his life to the collecting of collections* (Fowles, 1991, 177). As a result, he became lifeless, depraved, a fanatic misogynist and Conchis's description of DeDeukans might easily be applied to Nicholas: *self-denial was incomprehensible to him…for him even the most painful social confrontations and contrasts were stingless. Without significance*

BDD-A20467 © 2009 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:54 UTC)

except as vignettes, as interesting discord, as pleasurable because vivid examples of the algedonic polarity of existence (Fowles, 1991, 178).

The logical extension of the DeDeukans is Wimmel, whose similar attitudes assume extraordinary social and historical significance: *he had eyes like razors…without a grain of sympathy for what they saw. Nothing but assessment and calculation…they were eyes of a machine* (Fowles, 1991, 418). Wimmel says to Conchis: *I have only one supreme purpose in my life the German historical purpose to bring order into the chaos that is Europe* (Fowles, 1991, 428).

Part of Conchis's purpose in the masque is to obliterate Nicholas's power to reason. The many plays within the play are designed to estrange Nicholas from the safe ground of logic. The drama of Apollo, Diana and the satyr, for example, take place in the middle of Conchis's story about DeDeukans, during which Nicholas is having dinner with a dead Edwardian girl.

Nicholas tries desperately to see the connection between crazy old DeDeukans and this theatre of the gods but he flounders: *I enjoy it more if I knew what it meant,* and Conchis replies: *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* (Fowles, 1991, 185).

All are used to confirm or validate assertions of fact, but are really lives that lead to more lives. Nicholas's overuse of intellect causes the atrophy of his more affective powers and inevitably leads him into exile from his fellow humans: he ceases to be one of them. He has only one moment of sparkling intelligence, when he is hypnotised and grasps *the endless solitude of the one, its total inter-relationship to all* (Fowles, 1991, 239).

The twin sisters are employed by Conchis to personify Nicholas's schizophrenic attitude towards women, his belief that women are all either virgins or whores. His lust has nothing to do with Lily as it is disconnected from his object of desire, becoming self-satisfactory. Nicholas's fantasy is autoerotic, as is pornography, and this attitude represents Nicholas's *collector of consciousness* (Fowles, 1991, 177).

Although he understands his condition and sees Alison in a different light, he cannot find power to change himself; he realizes only partially what being and knowing are.

The story presented by Fowles may be concentrated in Jung's words:

For a long time spirit and passion were the greatest values, the things most worth striving for, in our peculiar Christian culture of the mind. Only after the decline of the Middle Ages…the spirit began to degenerate into intellect…which led to the pardonable mistake of confusing intellect with spirit… Intellect does, in fact, violate the soul when it tries to possess itself of the heritage of the spirit. It is in no way fitted to do this because in that it includes the feelings as well.

Bibliography

A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1966.

CAMPBELL, Joseph, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Bollingen Series XVII, Princeton University Press, 1973, (3rd edition).

FOWLES, John, *The Magus*, Picador, London, 1991.

JUNG, C.G., *În lumea arhetipurilor*, Editura Jurnalul Literar, Bucureşti, 1994.

JUNG, C.G., *Personalitate şi transfer,* Teora, Bucureşti, 1996.

JUNG, C.G., "*The Basic Postulates of Analytical Psychology"*, trans. by W.S. Dell and C.F. Baynes, in *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Kegan Paul, London, 1933.

LAING, R.D., *The Divided Self - A Study of Sanity and Madness*, Tavistock Publications Limited, London, 1960.

RANK, Otto, *Dublul Don Juan,* Institutul European, Iaşi, 1997.

STEVENS, Anthony, *Jung*, trad. Oana Vlad, editura Humanitas, Bucureşti, 2006

TARBOX, Katherine, *The Art of John Fowles*, the University of Georgia Press Athens, Georgia, 1988.

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shadow_(psychology)

BDD-A20467 © 2009 Valahia University Press

Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:54 UTC)

20th Century Literary Criticism. A Reader, edited by David Lodge, Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, 1972.

BDD-A20467 © 2009 Valahia University Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:54 UTC)