

METAMORPHOSING SELVES AND NARRATIONS IN
THE INTERROGATION AND THE MAGUS

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Thesis Abstract

Melis Günekan, “Metamorphosing Selves and Narrations in *The Interrogation* and *The Magus*”

The present study focuses on metamorphosis as a trope in one French and one English novel, both of the twentieth century. (Trope is defined in this thesis as a figure rather than a motif or theme.) Both of these novel novels, *The Interrogation* by J. M. G. Le Clézio and *The Magus* by John Fowles, present the reader with protean characters and explore the identity crisis and anxious selfhood of modern individuals who withdraw from the society in which they live. This thesis is a comparative analysis of how the two novelists explore this theme using metamorphosis as a trope.

Tez Özeti

Melis Günekan, “*Tutanak ve Büyücü* Romanlarında Metamorfoza Uğrayan Benlikler ve Anlatılar”

Bu çalışma dönüşümü romanlarına yapı taşı olarak alan biri Fransızca biri İngilizce olmak üzere iki yirminci yüzyıl romanını tartışmaktadır. J. M. G. Le Clézio’nun *Tutanak* ve John Fowles’in *Büyücü* adlarıyla Türkçe’ye çevrilen romanları okura sürekli değişikliğe uğrayan karakterler sunar ve yaşadığı toplumdan uzaklaşan modern bireyin kimlik krizini ve bireysellik kaygısını irdeler. Tez iki romancının aynı temayı dönüşüm kavramı çerçevesinde nasıl incelediklerine odaklanan karşılaştırmalı bir çalışmadır.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: <i>THE INTERROGATION</i>	10
CHAPTER 3: <i>THE MAGUS</i>	34
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION.....	53
REFERENCES	58

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Taking metamorphosis as a trope in the sense of a figure, this thesis analyzes the use of the trope by J. M. G. Le Clézio in *The Interrogation* and John Fowles in *The Magus* in their respective exploration of identity crisis and the anxious selfhood of modern individuals who are self-exiles from society. In both cases, self-exiled characters undergo metamorphosis, a very ancient trope which has been used through the centuries by writers East and West. Hence, it is in order to touch upon metamorphosis itself before discussing the two novels.

Metamorphosis as a trope is found in all cultures. In the Western tradition, though Homer precedes him in *The Odyssey*, the usual starting point is Ovid. Metamorphosis has existed as a literary trope in English and European poetry, the novel and drama for centuries. From Dante and Shakespeare to Kafka and James Joyce, major literary figures were fascinated by the idea of metamorphosis. As such, metamorphosis is a broad term that has been defined in numerous different ways such as transformation, imitation, shape shifting, doubles, doppelgangers and metaphor. In the traditional sense, metamorphosis implies a complete or partial change of form, the examples of which are most commonly found in ancient myths, legends, folklore, fairy tales and the kind of fantastic literature that deals with magic and the supernatural. In this regard, Ovid's famous sequence of narrative poems entitled *Metamorphoses* is a fundamental work that portrays various kinds of bodily transformation experienced by ancient gods, human beings, fauna and flora. In her work titled *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, Marina Warner notes that Ovidian metamorphosis portrays a universe that is fluid, reproductive and changing

as “rocks turn into men and women, when Deucalion and Pyrrha create a new generation of humans by tossing stones over their shoulders which spring up into life” (5) and trees bring into existence the beautiful Adonis. There is also subsequent permanence and stability in this altering universe because many of these metamorphoses are irreversible. Chased by the god Apollo, the nymph Daphne turns into a laurel tree when she prays to the gods for help. As punishment for boasting about her skills in weaving, Arachne is transformed into a spider by the goddess Minerva (Warner, 4-6). In Ovid’s tales transformation commonly occurs in the literal sense whether it is irreversible or not.

When we turn to English literature, from which I will choose most of my examples of the Western Tradition, the best known medieval stories of metamorphosis are John Gower’s short verse narrative “Ceix and Alceone” in which a kindly goddess turns a husband and wife permanently into birds, and the anonymous verse romance “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” where Bertilak can change into the Green Knight and back through magic. Metamorphosis appears in some of the great works of English Renaissance as well. In Marlowe’s “Doctor Faustus”, we have impermanent transformations undergone by some of the dramatic personae as well as the protagonist himself. Thanks to his magic, Dr. Faustus plays pranks on various persons, from the courtier Benvolio who grows antlers in his head to the horse courser to whom he first sells a vanishing horse then frightens the man by letting him pull his leg and severing it from his body. But aside from this crude type of comic transformation, metamorphosis as a trope is significant in Faustus’s own transformation which leads to his personal tragedy when he desires to be a demi-god. The play includes not only bodily but also spatiotemporal transformations as Faustus travels through history and the courts of Europe. By the magical power

he gains from Mephistophilis, Faustus becomes a shape shifter and an invisible trickster. Since he uses magic to become more powerful and to play tricks upon people, all the metamorphoses represent the steps to his eventual downfall. As each transformation is symbolic of the amoral and degenerate deeds he has performed, metamorphosis represents the inner change Faustus goes through from an eminent scholar into a desperate, guilty man.

It is Shakespeare, influenced and nourished by classical mythology, who depicts numerous metamorphic processes in his plays. Ovid and Apuleius are among the important figures Shakespeare makes allusions to although his characters, with the exception of Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Ariel turning briefly into a Harpy in *The Tempest*, do not undergo physical transformation in the Ovidian way. He presents many scenes of transformation in which a reversal of roles, shape shifting or imitation blur the line between reality and illusion. Prospero's magic creates metamorphosis through illusion as when the island appears as Eden to Gonzalo and a wilderness to Antonio and Sebastian. In *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, Shakespeare draws attention to the role of the female in a male-dominant Christian society. Portia is a rich heiress for whom her dead father devised a test to determine the right suitor to marry. As a woman whose happiness and fate depends on the person who chooses the right casket, Portia defines herself as an 'unlearned young girl'. Shakespeare presents gender reversal on the part of Portia and her maid Nerissa who suddenly appear as highly literate male lawyers in the court to defend Antonio. This raises the question of gender, identity and selfhood because Portia's temporary transformation into a male serves to give voice to the Christian institutions of law and patriarchy. Although the play has a technical happy ending in which problems appear to be solved, Shakespeare lays bare Portia's inferior situation as she

becomes autonomous only by imitating the opposite sex. In *The Merchant of Venice* that metamorphosis takes place in the figurative sense and in this way Shakespeare questions the extent to which it is possible for a female to be an independent, educated person in 16th century Venice. In the same way, gender reversal through male disguise as a temporary metamorphosis empowers women as well as protecting them in a man's world in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*.

The most playful metamorphoses are to be found in Alexander Pope's Rape of the Lock where women are transformed into sylphs and gnomes after their death and the lock itself into a comet or as Pope puts it a shooting star. Keats' poem *Lamia* reveals the Romantic fascination with the supernatural and mystery. Keats takes us back to the realm of classical mythology and tells the story of the serpentine Lamia, the vicious figure who devours children and disguises as a beautiful woman to seduce men. In the poem, Lamia desires to be restored back to her woman form so that she can enchant her mortal beloved Lycius. Keats draws an ambivalent picture in the reader's mind as to the transformation and selfhood of Lamia. On one hand, Lamia's amorous misery seems so real that her 'melancholy eyes' and mournful voice contradict her demonic qualities. However, her physical appearance and metamorphosis suggest that the pitiful creature is actually a devilish deceiver who plans to victimize Lycius. As the Circean serpent whose 'elfin blood in madness ran' transforms into a charming virgin, she nonetheless possesses her previous knowledge and experience about love and magic. Yet, the eventual victimization of Lamia by Lycius displays metaphorical transformation of the mortal beloved into a cruel and ambitious man. Keats does not depict Lamia as an archetypal 'femme fatale' like La Belle Dame Sans Merci because he uses metamorphosis as a trope to represent the reversal of roles between the victim and the victimizer.

Metamorphosis acquires a totally metaphorical aspect when we consider how “personification” of the physical environment is used to express the mood of a character. In his gothic poem titled *Mariana*, Tennyson describes the melancholy and despondency of a woman who is abandoned by her lover. Tennyson builds, through what Ruskin calls the pathetic fallacy, a parallelism between the physical world and Mariana’s emotions mainly by attributing human traits to the grange and the nature. Although it may seem farfetched at first to consider the poem as exemplifying metamorphosis, all the metaphors Tennyson uses serve to represent the unstable mental state of Mariana whose voice is only heard in the refrain. The description of ‘the moated grange’ with flower beds covered with blackest moss, the rusty nails, the broken sheds and the worn and weedy thatch are all symbolic of her isolation and emotional ruin. The personification of the flora evokes the idea that the landscape itself is an actor as the marish-mosses are creeping and a poplar tree is shaking. The gradual transformation of the environment from an outworn cottage into an animate, phantasmagorical realm represents the transformation of Mariana whose distressed and suicidal mental state gradually gains a hallucinatory and mad aspect.

When we look at the various examples of metamorphosis in English literary history, it becomes almost impossible to reduce the trope solely to the traditional definition of physical transformation undergone by a living form. What is significant about metamorphosis is that the term itself has been subjected to constant alteration in line with the diversity of themes and techniques employed by authors. Whereas a bodily transformation is much more manifest in tales of classical mythology, legend and folklore, figurative representations of the trope gain priority over the literal in the works of art which turn metamorphosis into metaphor or put it to symbolic use. In this respect, many novelists use the trope to present us with protean characters for

which Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a good example. The tragedy of the wealthy and cultivated Dorian is Faustian in the sense that both characters pledge their soul in exchange for their unearthly desires and suffer the consequences of aspiring to worldly pleasures. Under the influence of the Mephistophelean Lord Henry, Dorian feels anxious over losing his youth and physical beauty, and wishes for his portrait to grow old as he stays the same. Wilde discloses the personal crisis of the young 'Prince Charming' whose voluptuous lifestyle turns him into a malicious figure as he becomes a cruel lover, a murderer and a blackmailer. In this respect, the metamorphosis of the marvellous painting stands for Dorian's inner transformation because the more corrupted Dorian becomes the more hideous his portrait gets.

When we take into account how the nature of a story alters or metamorphoses in its rewriting as in Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*, we note that modern and contemporary novelists offer a distinct perspective on metamorphosis and its relation to narration, identity and language. In her work, Carter rewrites well-known folk and fairy tales from a feminist perspective. Although she does not change the course of events in the stories, her satirical take on patriarchal discourses involves the transformation of characterization and style.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* constitutes a distinguished example in adapting a classical masterpiece through parody to the modernist context. Joyce uses numerous Homeric allusions to experiment with narration, language and style. In turning an archetypal hero's adventures into a modern nobody's everyday life, the novel overflows with metamorphic processes which provide a critical outlook on subjects such as gender and identity politics, law and religion. This is observable in the 'Cyclops' episode where the Citizen and Bloom confront each other with the bag of

social, political and religious values they carry. The former, being a fanatical anti-Semite, is at first praised as a heroic man who measures several ells from shoulder to shoulder. This mock-heroic treatment transforms the xenophobic nationalist into a gigantic figure with ‘widewinged and cavernous nostrils where the fieldlark might easily have lodged her nest’ (*U* 12.382). The larger than life-size description of the Citizen is a stylistic metamorphosis which is used in this episode to degrade the absolutist values he symbolizes. Joyce makes use of the trope to manipulate and parody mythic heroism in order to subvert the nationalistic xenophobia symbolized by an ordinary Dubliner. In this way, Joyce pulls the rug from under the feet of his characters who symbolize certain authoritarian values. This is also noticeable in Bloom’s hallucinations in the “Circe” episode where he is put to a comic trial as a cuckolded husband and then enthroned and excessively praised as the religious figure ‘Leopold the First’ – ‘emperor president and king chairman’ (*U*15. 604). The subsequent accusations of him as a libertine show that the episode questions, within the theatrical realm of identity transformations, the reality behind these “authorities”.

The episode called “The Oxen of the Sun” manifests the metamorphosis of identity as well as of style. This is seen in the way the characters, the scene and events are narrated through the entire episode in which Joyce situates the development of the English language at a maternal hospital. Bloom’s arrival at the Lying-in Hospital is narrated through a parody of the early Anglo-Saxon style where Bloom is reduced to ‘some man of Israel’s folk’. Whereas the archaic style imposes a noble posture on Bloom as ‘childe Bloom’, he becomes ‘Sir Leopold’ and Stephen is referred to as ‘young Stephen’. In the context of 17th century prose, Bloom is further transformed into ‘Master Bloom’ when explaining to Stephen the science of thunder. In this respect, Joyce’s stylistic experimentation with the trope calls

attention to the changing views on identity that take shape in line with the social, religious and political values of each period and find expression in changing discourses. In the light of these examples, it can be suggested that there is no clear-cut distinction between the literal and the figurative uses of the trope.

I could also like to draw attention to the most famous example of European literature which centre around metamorphosis as a trope, Kafka. His novella called “The Metamorphosis” has been subjected to analysis from numerous divergent perspectives with respect to the remarkable way he approaches the trope. The realistic narration of Gregor’s situation has aroused much interest from literary criticism because the work remains ambiguous over the metamorphosis of Gregor who wakes up in his bed one morning as a bug. Although Gregor’s metamorphosis seems complete at the start, the work revolves around the aftermath of his physical transformation which is the beginning of an on-going process of mental and physical change. Kafka offers the literal and figurative aspects of the trope simultaneously in demonstrating Gregor’s alienation and agony. The repercussions of the economic and psychological burdens Gregor bears affect not only his body, but also his psyche. For this reason, the novella rules out a clear differentiation between the literal and the figurative so as to illustrate the way one aspect of the trope acts on the other. As symbolic of how he has been treated by the family and the work place, Gregor’s transformation into an insect results in his gradual alienation from and rejection by both institutions. Having been treated as inhuman, Gregor’s basic habits gradually alter together with his means of communication. Thus, his transformation is completed the moment he loses all his humanity and shrinks into a little bug. This indicates that the major metamorphosis is one which involves the selfhood of Gregor who is referred to as ‘it’ in the end. In the novella, the literal aspect of

metamorphosis serves to support the figurative aspect so as to show the reader that it is not only the human soul that suffers the familial and professional maltreatment, but the body as well.

The overview in the present chapter is an indication of the versatility of this trope and the various uses to which metamorphosis has been put by different authors. In the main body of this thesis, I will discuss two twentieth century novels respectively by J. M. G. Le Clézio and John Fowles which turn on the crux of the mainly figurative metamorphosis in their inquiry into the isolation and the identity crisis of the modern individual.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERROGATION

Starting from his own human flesh, from the sum of his present sensations, he annihilates himself by a dual system of multiplication and identification. Thanks to these two methods he can reason in the future as well as in the present and the past. Provided one takes these words at their proper value, that is to say as words. Whether close at hand or far off. He gradually obliterates himself by self creation. He practices a kind of sympoetry and ends not in Beauty, Ugliness, Ideal, Happiness, but in oblivion and absence. Soon he no longer exists. He is himself no longer. He is lost, a weak particle that still moves, still describes itself. He is no more than a vague ghost, solitary, eternal, measureless, the terror of lonely old women, who creates himself, dies, lives and lives again and sinks into darkness, hundreds, millions and milliards of an infinite time, neither one nor the other .

(Le Clézio, 143)

J. M. G. Le Clézio's *The Interrogation*, the winner of the 1963 Prix Renaudot, is an experimental first novel by the French author which is concerned with an existentialist inquiry into the isolation and identity crisis of the modern man. The novel manifests a deconstructivist challenge to the significance of certain social norms and institutions in shaping a sense of 'selfhood' for the individual. The third person narration in *The Interrogation* declares in no uncertain terms that the novel centres on the protagonist's metamorphosis. It situates a mad amnesiac called Adam Pollo at its heart as the representative man and explores the human condition in chaotic modern society. Resolved to have the least amount of human and social contact possible, Adam breaks into an empty seaside villa and spends most of his time sitting motionless by the window thinking and writing. He occasionally visits

the town only to obtain food, cigarettes and drink. At those rare times he spends at the city centre or the beach, he avoids any unnecessary human contact and conversation. The novel revolves around Adam's existential anguish and the scattered thoughts of the protagonist who observes the world around him in minute detail. From the smallest stone on the beach to the mountains in the view, we observe Adam in deep thought. In contemplating the outside world, Adam oscillates between different identities because he attempts to experience life through the eyes of other living species such as a dog and a rat.

Through simile, metaphor, the supernatural and metempsychosis, *The Interrogation* dwells on the figurative aspect of metamorphosis which is manifest in three major categories: thematic, textual and spatiotemporal. Le Clézio explores modern man's isolation and existential anguish through these categories and presents diverse 'self' and 'other' positions which are simultaneously occupied and further overpassed by the protagonist whose identity alters. The thematic treatment of the trope is concerned with the selfhood tension that urges Adam to explore and redefine the self beyond the limits of social and institutional circumscriptions. Throughout the novel, Adam is given many different identities. He is referred to by the omniscient narrator as the man who is not sure if he has just left the army or a mental hospital, the last man of his race, the patient diagnosed and put into asylum. Also, Adam calls himself as the deserter from the army. Le Clézio also includes newspaper reports in the novel which describe Adam as the maniac and insane man arrested and interrogated. Each of these attributions Adam is subjected to restricts his selfhood in institutional and social definitions. In this regard, the novel portrays the mental, physical and narrative existence of Adam Pollo with ambiguity and refuses to place his selfhood on stable ground. Adam's selfhood remains in an in-between state as he

occupies several 'subject' and 'object' positions simultaneously. The transformations of selfhood in *The Interrogation* pose the major questions the novel seeks to answer: 'Can we put the individual in definitive boundaries or social norms?'; 'To what extent can the modern individual exist outside institutional discourses?' What emerges from the metamorphic processes in the novel is a problematization of the either/or logic behind various binary oppositions such as self/other, sane/insane and doctor/patient. As part of his 'existentialist' agenda, Le Clézio foregrounds the motifs of amnesia and madness to deal with the issue of isolation and to question the hierarchical and binary logic overruling certain social identifications. The trope serves as a dynamic force to explore the self through the mental, physical and narrative metamorphoses experienced by Adam Pollo.

In *The Interrogation*, Le Clézio treats metamorphosis on textual and spatiotemporal bases by means of the fragmentary narrative structure which is made up of disconnected accounts and moments. However, the nonlinear narrative does not simply shift from one event to another. In the novel, the seemingly detached accounts are sometimes interwoven into each other so as to obscure the concept of time and transform the landscape. When the equivocal narration shifts from a past memory to a present incident, the reader remains undecided over the linearity and reality of what is happening. For example, the section which is about the time Adam spends at a restaurant with soldiers includes a temporal transformation. Back at the villa, Adam suddenly ages: "Adam huddled on his stool; shut in by a strange old age, he was quietly resuming his place in the sun, in the deserted house at the top of the hill" (37). Throughout the novel, the reader assumes Adam to be a young man in his thirties because the narrative does not include any account of Adam's later years. However, in this particular scene Adam seems as if he has been in the room for a life

time. Another significant example is observable when Adam meets a woman called Michèle whom he regards as his girlfriend. A seemingly past memory turns into a present experience when Michèle leaves the cafe in exactly the same dress as the time she is supposed to have spent in the mountains with Adam: “with her man’s raincoat tightly belted, her hair flattened by the rain, a black spot of oil on her left ankle” (31).

In this respect, Le Clézio builds a parallelism between the narrative structure and the hallucinatory nature of Adam’s thoughts in the context of metafiction. The more difficulty Adam has in distinguishing what is real or not, the more fragmented and ambiguous the narration becomes. Partial loss of memory causes Adam to view his life in vague fragments, and this is how Le Clézio shapes the representation of his character. As concerns narration, plot and characterization, the author uses the motifs of madness and amnesia to disintegrate time and space. Within the scope of this chapter, I aim to analyze the thematic, textual and spatiotemporal metamorphoses in *The Interrogation* which posit a displacement of a clearly defined self for the isolated individual.

As the representative man, Adam Pollo stands for the modern individual in a consumer society. Yet, Le Clézio does not present Adam solely as an epitome of the modern man who finds himself alienated in a fragmented and chaotic world because Adam’s existential anguish involves personal concerns as well. The novel is not only about our human condition, but it also talks about a man who has a familial, educational and professional background. Apart from being a symbol for humankind, Adam Pollo is an intellectual ‘who had been trained to meditation by years at a university and a life devoted to reading’ (12). His fear of imprisonment, discontent with society, personal conflicts with others and also internal conflicts as an amnesiac

lead him to be an outcast. These factors reveal that Adam's withdrawal is an enforced choice as well as a voluntary one both of which affect his life in different ways.

The primary thematic concern over Adam's isolation centres on military and psychiatric institutions' claims of recognition and authority over the individual. Early in the novel, the reader learns that Adam's isolation began the moment he cast his motorbike into the sea and convinced everybody that he is dead. This deceptive death can be regarded as the rupture point of his family- and society-bound existence.

On one hand, Le Clézio specifies for the reader that Adam Pollo has recently been in an asylum or in the army. In his foreword to the work, he hints at the possibility that Adam's alienation is an escape from either one of these institutions: "The Interrogation is the story of a man who is not sure whether he has just left the army or a mental home" (6). In the beginning, the author rejects to maintain a fixed social identity for Adam by leaving it uncertain which institution he was really subjected to. Together with the information given by the author, Adam's words quoted below show that the reason behind his vulnerability is a kind of repressive experience which conditioned him to be submissive:

When I decided to live here I took all I needed, as though I were going fishing, I came back in the night, and then I toppled my motorbike into the sea. Like that I gave the impression I was dead, and I didn't need to go on making everyone believe I was alive and had heaps of things to do, to keep myself alive. [...] Nobody asks me questions, and I don't have to talk too much; that doesn't worry me, because years ago they got me into the habit of keeping my mouth shut, and I could easily pass for deaf, dumb and blind. (9)

On the other hand, Adam's conflict with institutional authority is predominantly related to the military rather than psychiatry. Throughout the novel, there are several

instances which reveal that Adam regards the military as a threat because being a deserter is the most recent memory he has. This seems to contradict the in-between state maintained by the author because the character does not mention any worry about psychiatric institutions. Yet, Le Clézio appears to be intentionally creating contradictory possibilities about Adam's selfhood. Through the omniscient narrator, he reminds us several times that the amnesiac protagonist is in a dilemma over which institution he has got away from: "That was it, he'd got it, he grasped it and let it escape at the same moment; he felt sure, and yet he no longer even knew what he was doing, what he was going to do, whether he had escaped from a lunatic asylum or deserted from the army" (61).

In this respect, Adam's eventual arrest and removal to an asylum shows that, rather than exploring the reality behind his experience within the institutions, the novel is preoccupied with the hierarchical logic prevailing in social structures by pulling the military and psychiatry to the centre. Thus, the individual's conflict with institutional authority is a recurring theme in the novel. Adam's words indicate that his self-imposed withdrawal is an escape he carries out at night so as not to be noticed. It is quite apparent that Adam was conditioned to become less conscious and less declarative about what he thinks or observes. Therefore, he has already been subjected to a kind of transformation or metamorphosis which has taught him to be submissive.

Portrayed as a beggar-like figure with a slouch, Adam is "like one of those sick animals that make a canny retreat into some refuge and watch stealthily for danger" (7). Since Le Clézio presents us with limited information about the protagonist's past, we cannot juxtapose Adam's present situation with his former condition. Nevertheless, the comparison between the protagonist and a vigilant

animal reveals the change he is going through with regard to his humanity and selfhood. As an example for the figurative usage of metamorphosis, the simile above displays the effect of the military on Adam's posture and attitudes. The comparison characterizes him as a startled outsider heedful of being victimized which is also evident in the following lines: "Because of course it is tiring to live all alone like that, in a deserted house at the top of the hill [...] wanting to dig lairs all the time and to hide in them, abasing yourself, keeping well concealed as you used to do when you were a kid, between two ragged pieces of old tarpaulin" (16).

In this respect, Adam's physical appearance reflects his desire to conceal himself as a recluse, "his face was dirty, his hair too long, and his straggling beard had been hacked off with scissors" (17). His concern about a possible arrest turns him into a more cautious and fearful person (like the sick animal in the above mentioned simile) who feels much relieved in the dark and believes that 'they' will eventually come to the villa to kill him. Even when he spends some time among people, Adam prefers to be far off the crowd. The quote below shows that the kind of imprisonment which frightens him is violent and dehumanizing:

Adam Pollo, a deserter from the army, is at the mercy of the first informer who comes along, and that any day –or rather any hour, any minute –two fellows in uniform may appear on the scene, beat me up, kick me, shove into a strait-waistcoat, handcuff me –the lot –and not rest content till they've clapped me into the darkest cell in some army barracks, with no food, no heating, no women, no nothing. (28)

Adam imagines himself as being deprived of his basic necessities as a human being for whom the possibility of individual rights or choices seems impossible. Adam's perception of the military is marked by power, control and restriction which designate a subordinate 'other' position for him. In her work *Subjectivities: A History*

of Self Representation in Britain, 1832-1920, Regina Gagnier follows Foucault's footsteps and draws attention to the effect social discourses and human relations have on shaping a sense of 'subjectivity' for the individual:

First, the subject is a subject to itself, an "I", however difficult or even impossible it may be for others to understand this "I" from its own viewpoint, within its own experience. Simultaneously, the subject is a subject to, and of, others; in fact, it is often an "Other" to others which also affects its sense of its own subjectivity [...] Third, the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being. (8)

What happens in *The Interrogation* can be associated with Gagnier's argument as the novel demonstrates the constraining impact of social institutions and the self/other dichotomy in forming a conception of selfhood for the individual. The protagonist's identification with a deserter implies both a kind of metamorphosis and the inferior position he occupies as opposed to the authoritarian stance of the military. Adam's case displays the conflict of man when he attempts to break the link between individuality and social institutions. His desire for total disengagement from the military leads Adam to disguise himself under the appearance of a destitute outsider on the margins of society.

This brings up the issue of identity because the protagonist's isolation reduces him into the so-called 'other'. In other words, the struggle to escape a repressive institution results in a similar kind of victimization. Being a runaway compels Adam to shape his life in line with the institutional impositions he tries to avoid. On the alert with the fear of being caught, Adam has become uneasy, fearful and intimidated like a trapped animal. He even tries to be an unidentified person, to erase his identity by introducing himself with another name when he meets a sailor at a cafe.

What is more, his isolated life style evokes the idea of confinement which startles him. When we compare his two states, it is seen that it is Adam himself who creates an imprisoning environment similar to the one he fears. The deserted villa can be regarded as Adam's 'cell', avoiding human contact as much as possible and reducing his existence to basic necessities. Even though the isolation in the villa is not as harsh and oppressive as the one in the military or in asylum, the most striking issue is what Adam experiences as a deserter. To clarify, Adam not only alters his physical environment and breaks his familial and social bonds, but his posture and manners change as well. In this sense too, we notice a kind of metamorphosis. Moreover, *The Interrogation* foregrounds Adam's active role in creating an enclosed environment. Thus, it can be suggested that the novel leads us to consider Adam as the agent of his own confinement which is the irony of the novel.

This analysis is in line with Foucault's ideas on the individual's active involvement in power relations. In his article entitled "The Subject and Power", Foucault points out that to analyze power relations in society we must question the 'attempts made to dissociate these relations' (780). To achieve this, the issue should be considered from the perspective of the oppressed side. In discussing how power is practiced, Foucault draws attention to the means by which it is exercised and suggests that the crucial way to exercise power is through the manipulation of our actions. He writes:

What defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead, it acts upon their actions: an action upon action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future [...] a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements [...] that "the other" (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up. (789)

Power is, by definition, a way of action by one agent which is directed at a possible set of actions and behaviours of another. A relationship of power is thus bilateral. In this respect, Foucault foregrounds the idea that power is not exercised in a top-down fashion and that the manipulation of actions entails the presence of ‘free subjects’. As Foucault puts it “power is exercised only over free subjects, [...] who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized” (790). When we consider Adam’s case from this perspective, his being conditioned as a free subject to be deaf, dumb and blind evokes the idea that the kind of transformation Adam was led to experience is manipulative and oppressive. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the enclosed realm he creates is shaped by the kind of imprisonment to which he was conditioned but which he escapes. That is to say, Adam’s isolation reveals the mode of imprisonment he is led to react against. Being trapped like an animal, Adam’s attempts to dissociate himself from institutional authority are dehumanizing. The crucial reason behind this is not the act of arrest itself, but the fact that Adam is victimized by the probable consequences of being caught. Thus, the crux of Adam’s situation is that his attempt to avoid victimization ends up in self-victimization.

As I have earlier pointed out, Le Clézio presents Adam both as an amnesiac individual and as a symbol for humankind. In this respect, the novel dwells upon the issue of madness from both standpoints because Adam’s mental state does not solely reflect personal concerns. *The Interrogation* displays the maddening effect of institutional authority as well as that of the individual’s discontent with society. Le Clézio does not present these matters as independent from each other. Instead, the social norms with regards to madness and the institutional treatment of it wield

influence on Adam's existential anguish over our condition in the chaotic and fragmented society in which we live.

As a result of his self-imposed confinement and substantial loneliness, Adam's contemplations run into hallucinations. Le Clézio's existential framework focuses on the mental and sensory experience of the isolated man by using the figurative aspect of metamorphosis. First of all, the trope represents perception of the chaos that frightens the modern individual. In the opening section of the novel, Adam concentrates on the shadows cast by the sun which reflect onto the walls and his illusory perception turns his room in the villa into a Dantesque hell where humans are metamorphosing into terrifying monsters:

He looked at the ground and saw it suddenly melting, boiling, or flowing beneath his feet. The trees grew excited and gave off poisonous vapours. The sea began to swell, devoured the narrow grey strip of beach and then rose, rose to attach the hill, to drown him, moving towards him, to numb him, to swallow him up in its dirty waves. He could feel the fossilized monsters coming to birth somewhere, prowling round the villa, the joints of their huge feet cracking [...] even human beings become hostile, barbarous, their limbs sprouted wool, their heads shrank, and they advanced in serried ranks over the countryside, cannibalistic, cowardly or ferocious. The moths flung themselves on him, biting him with their mandibles, wrapping him in the silky veil of their hairy wings. From the pools there rose an armoured nation of parasites or shrimps, of abrupt, mysterious crustaceans, hungering to tear off shreds of his flesh. (13)

In the above extract, all the physical transformations are about the end of the world which is defined by monstrosity, rack and ruin. Adam's vision of hell is characterized by deformity undergone by human beings, fauna and flora. The supernatural hell imagery is dominated by terror and disaster, annihilating the human being. In this scene, the literal and figurative usages of the trope go hand in hand. Although metamorphosis is symbolic of Adam's catastrophic vision, it is also

manifest in the literal sense to portray the chaotic world that terrifies Adam. In other words, the literal metamorphoses that occur in Adam's hallucination unfold the figurative aspect of the trope so as to project the idea of chaos. For him, the physical disfigurement of man, fauna and flora represent our condition in modern society.

In his mind, Adam suffers from humankind's abuse of the earth in the most damaging way possible. In return, flora and fauna threaten to destroy mankind as a punishment. In *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, Marina Warner highlights the association between bestiality and punishment in Dante's *Inferno* and writes:

Within the Judaeo-Christian tradition, metamorphosis has marked out heterodoxy, instability, perversity, unseemliness, monstrosity. [...] It distinguishes good from evil, the blessed from the heathen and the damned: in the Christian heaven, nothing changes, whereas in hell, everything combines and recombines in terrible amalgams, compounds, breeding hybrids, monsters –and mutants. (35-36)

She points out that in Christianity sinners are condemned to undergo metamorphosis into bestial form as a result of which they suffer from loss of identity. Parallel to Warner's analysis, physical disfigurements in Adam's vision can be considered as a punishment mankind is condemned to undergo. It is the cruel and brutal side of humankind that is frightening for Adam, leading him into despair.

Le Clézio does not present Adam as the first man of the human race. Instead, Adam stands for the dehumanized condition of mankind: hostile, corruptive and ruinous. It is the downfall of humanity that tears Adam apart as the representative man. Being aware of this is beyond endurance for him as he states: "I'm crushed by the weight of my consciousness. *I'm dying of it*, that's a fact [...] It's killing me" (48). His existential anguish embodies man's state of being not only within the microcosm of modern society, but within the macrocosm as well. In the lines below,

the juxtaposition of the extinct species with Adam's own life being in jeopardy foregrounds his central concern in that 'he, Adam Pollo, [...] was no doubt the last of his race, and this was true, because the race was approaching its end' (61).

I'm concerned the earth has turned into a sort of chaos, I'm scared of the deinotheria, the pithecanthropes, the Neanderthal man (a cannibal), not to mention the dinosaurs, the labyrinthosaurs, the pterodactyls, etc. I'm afraid the hill may turn into a volcano. Or the polar ice may melt, which would raise the level of the sea and drown me. (14)

Here, we see him going back in time, feeling frightened by the extinct species and the primitive man. Adam associates modern man's future with annihilation and extinction by considering his state side by side with the extinct species. For this reason, the idea of metamorphosis that startles Adam is its backwards evolution in the sense that man has regressed into monstrous creatures by corrupting and mistreating the earth which will eventually cause the extinction of mankind.

In *The Interrogation*, metamorphosis as a trope is of critical importance because it illustrates the individual's existential inquiry of essence and identity. Adam's contemplations and hallucinations are also preoccupied with animal existence in that he attempts to explore life not only outside social circumscriptions but also outside his own existence as a human being. Whereas Adam avoids spending much time among people, he finds himself at the city centre when he follows a black dog he encounters on the beach. With careful observation, he trails the dog called Olivier and imitates its actions in the most accurate way possible.

The interaction between Adam and Olivier calls into question the existing definition of being for both sides because Adam finds himself trying to experience life through the eyes of one of the most domesticated and socialized animals, a dog

which is known to be docile and faithful to its master and yet violent to strangers. The dog spends time at the beach and the city centre by itself. As it heads towards the city centre, it finds its way without hesitation. Also, it goes directly 'home' when its owner calls out its name. In this respect, Le Clézio prefers to put emphasis on obedience as a learned behaviour for the animal. Obviously having been trained to follow rules, the black dog bears human qualities as it stops at a red light 'waiting obediently for the traffic policeman to wave people across the road' (68). Whereas Adam tries to estrange himself from social life and explore a different mode of being, he ironically faces social obligations and rules when trying to metamorphose by mimicking an animal.

I have already mentioned that imitation is among the techniques that are used to convey metamorphosis in literary texts. In this particular example, through imitation and mimicry, the trope demonstrates the extent to which the animal's natural habits have been subjected to transformation. The dog is considerably socialized and thus it behaves contrary to its own nature by obeying established social rules. As for Adam, his try at having a nonhuman experience yields unexpected because he mimics an animal that has already been mimicking human actions. Here Le Clézio is raising the issue of social identity. By highlighting the dog's humanlike habits, Le Clézio confronts us with the restrictive aspect of socialization. In a consumer society, the modern individual is not only rule-bound, but he/she becomes the means of teaching such conduct. That is to say, the individual shapes his/her surroundings in line with learnt social structures and in this way he/she serves to circulate and perpetuate social norms and rules.

Furthermore, Adam finds out that even though he is able to mimic the animal's actions meticulously, he cannot fully recognize the way it communicates

with its own species. The interaction between two dogs can only be reduced into onomatopoeic words for a human being:

Adam and the dog both followed the bitch with their eyes –their bodies turned the way they were walking, but their heads twisted back over their shoulders. They went on like this for a few seconds’ silence, with little yellow flecks at the back of their eyes. Then the dog barked and Adam growled wordlessly, deep down in his throat: rrrrrrrrrrrrrroa, rrrrrrrrrrrroaa, oaarrrrrrr, rrrrrrrro. (67)

The quotation above suggests that Adam’s metamorphosis is incomplete; he can only pretend to be a dog because he cannot go further than imitation. First, he comes face to face with the dog’s humanlike actions. Then, he discovers what is particularly animal with regards to its sense of time, space and communication. Even if the black dog’s habits as an animal were partially altered, he still occupies a distinctive territory in terms of animal senses and instincts. In exploring whether it is possible to maintain a total detachment from the social self, imitation leaves Adam in an in-between state as he is incapable of fully identifying with an animal. The omniscient narrator characterizes Adam’s situation as being ‘lost’:

He, Adam, was well and truly lost; not being a dog (or not yet, perhaps) he could not steer himself by all these notes inscribed on the ground, these smells, these microscopic details that rose up from the resonant tarmac and automatically enveloped the rachidian bulb via the muzzle, the eyes, the ears or even the mere contact of padding paws or scratching toe nails. And being in any case no longer human –never again- he passed, unseeing, right through the town, and nothing meant anything to him anymore. (69)

Trailing the dog leads Adam into one of the most crowded social environments, a shopping centre, as it follows a bitch to this chaotic environment of consumerism. Overflowing with customers, the mall is described as a noisy and flashy place where the announcements for new products and those on sale continue without cease. In

this section, the dog has sexual intercourse with the bitch that ‘in a few months’ time would be filled with half-a-dozen little mongrel puppies’ (74). Meanwhile, the flashes of a photomaton machine mimic the pace of the mating:

The little blue light in the photomaton machine went on and off, [...] in this vault of the shop, sunk below ground-level, people were talking louder, laughing more boisterously, buying and selling hand over fist. There was a constant flicking of photographs, and every time the magnesium flashed it shattered something in the middle of a white circle where the dogs seemed to be wrestling, open-mouthed, their eyes wide in a kind of avid terror. (73)

Gradually, Adam becomes disgusted not only by humankind’s passion to consume more and more but also by the intercourse between the animals, the reflection of which he watches through the photomaton machine. As the intercourse and the serial act of photography are portrayed concurrently, the scene creates a parallelism between the sex act and consumerism.

The photomaton machine on the other hand duplicates our image and turns it into a copy in a flash. It captures the image and fits it into a frame by producing a miniature copy of our appearance. The idea of stabilizing an image and producing serial copies of it foregrounds something about modern man which Adam dislikes. He despises the tragic condition of the modern man who multiplies, lives in crowded places, and is more inclined to consume than to produce. Le Clézio creates such a parallelism so as to problematize whether human beings are, by nature, inclined to consume or whether it is a learned behaviour. Adam feels stupefied, full of hate and uneasy in the shopping mall because he is confronted with the type of person he disapproves: “he was dazed by the noise and the lights and felt somehow caught up in the human swarm; it was rather as though he were moving in reverse, and a hesitant nausea lingered in his throat; [...] he couldn’t resist reading the price-tags all

round him; a sort of commercial instinct was trying to put things to rights in his consciousness” (72).

Later on, Adam starts to view life through the eyes of a white rat he sees in the seaside villa and kills the rat out of terror. Le Clézio’s novel further encourages the reader to question the ontological status of what is happening by demonstrating a two-way metamorphosis between Adam and a white rat. When he first notices the animal, Adam momentarily empathizes with it as he ‘discovered in the rat something akin to himself’ (80). Hence, the first thing that comes to mind is Adam’s own situation as a fearful and furtive figure who tries to be unseen. These are the characteristics generally attributed to a rat. Yet, he feels an urge to kill the animal the moment he imagines himself as a rat. It makes him feel vulnerable, terrified and endangered. No traditional metamorphosis is manifest here because this time Adam’s feelings and thoughts are on the forefront instead of imitation or mimicry:

Slowly, quietly, imperceptibly, Adam forgot that he was Adam [...] Adam was turning into a white rat, but by a strange kind of metamorphosis; he still kept his own body, his hands and feet didn’t turn pink nor his front teeth lengthen into fangs; no, [...] But he was turning into a white rat because he was thinking of himself as one; because all of a sudden he had formed an idea of the danger that the human race represented for this breed of small, myopic, delicate animals. He knew that he could squeak, run, gnaw, stare with his two little round, blue, brave, lidless eyes; but it would be all in vain. A man like himself would always be sufficient; he need only resolve to take a few steps forward and lift his foot a few inches, and the rat would be killed. (80-81)

He associates being a white rat with inferiority and feels violence and rage towards the animal which he attempts to kill with billiard balls and a stick. He assaults it as being doubly ‘the other’. It is the other of its race as it is white and also inferior as an animal when compared to a human being: “White rat, the world is no place for you. You’re doubly disqualified for living: in the first place a rat in a man’s world,

among men's houses and traps and guns and rat-poison. And in the second place you're a white rat in a country where rats are generally black. So you're absurd" (82).

Contrary to his interaction with the dog, Adam's mental metamorphosis into a rat is not only intensely felt, but also involves a considerable sense of being powerful and superior. His rage towards the animal reveals that being different from the majority of its race results in maltreatment. Thus, the trope is concerned with authority and power in this case. Adam's sense of being is formed by the hierarchical logic overruling the self/other dichotomy in line with which we shape social and cultural norms. The animal represents the place a deserter, a mad person or a beggar occupies in society which is that of the outcast. Therefore, the rat mirrors Adam's own victimization as an outcast which displays that Adam's violent anger is an act of self-disgust. In his study called "Conceptions of Language in the Works of Le Clézio", Joyce Sharon Weiner discusses Adam's situation in similar terms, but then claims that Adam's lethal act actually reflects his disapproval and dislike of our human condition:

Adam's killing of the white rat is more of a gesture of self-contempt than an act of self-defence against the creature. [...] Adam is obviously a pariah in the society in which he lives, but perhaps Le Clézio is making a statement about man's fundamental nature through him. Adam Pollo, who is named after the first of all men, but whose last name is that of a barnyard animal in Spanish, is may be no more than the last of the beasts. (29-30)

Moreover, the rat also undergoes a transformation into a man which is urged by its feelings of terror and fear. In this respect, *The Interrogation* casts doubt on where the metamorphosis begins or ends when Adam and the white rat are engaged a two-way

transformation. The reader remains unsure as to which side to situate Adam. In the course of events, is he the man-becoming-animal or the animal-becoming-man?

Adam knew he embodies this fear. He was a colossal danger, rippling with muscles –a kind of gigantic white rat, if you like, ravenously craving to devour its own species. Whereas the rat, the real one, was being transformed by its hatred and terror into a man. The little animal kept twitching nervously, as though about to burst into tears or fall on its knees and begin to pray. Adam, moving stiffly on all fours, advanced towards it, shrieking, growling, muttering insults. There were no such things as words any longer; they were neither uttered nor received; [...] Adam was lost amid the abstract; he was living, neither more nor less; occasionally he even *squeaked*. (83-84).

In this respect, the way Le Clézio dwells on the trope can be associated with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of metamorphosis in the way they approach vis-a-vis the works of Kafka. In their famous work *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, the co-authors argue that metamorphosis entails a process of transformation both for the man and the animal in Kafka's animal stories in which the man-becoming-animal has an active connection with the animal-becoming-man. They associate metamorphosis with the idea of 'becoming' and their discussion of both notions goes hand in hand. For them, metamorphosis entails a process of 'becoming' in which the interaction between two entities dislocates the existing definition of being in both. 'Becoming' detaches man from his original territory and places him into another through his relation with something other than himself.

With respect to Kafka, Deleuze and Guattari argue that metamorphosis goes far beyond imitation or metaphors in man's interaction with the animal or vice versa: "Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense [...] It is no longer a question of resemblance between a

compartment of an animal and that of a man [...] There is no longer man or animal since each deterritorializes the other, in a conjunction of flux” (*Kafka*, 22).

The idea of becoming serves to blur the firm line between self/other or subject/object oppositions as it involves a two-way displacement. It is not only the man who deterritorializes the dog, but also the dog that deterritorializes the man. That is to say, the becoming-dog of the man, the becoming-man of the dog, the becoming-beetle of the man all involve a blurring of the subject position or the self who utters and writes in a meaningful or figurative sense. Deleuze and Guattari consider Kafka as dethroning the stability of the subject of enunciation which brings forth a destruction of “all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation” (22). In this respect, language is affected by deterritorialization through, for example, “Gregor’s warbling and the ways it blurred words” (21). In other words, they refuse to regard Gregor’s metamorphosis as metaphor and imitation because becoming obscures the entity itself towards which a figurative comparison is designated. Gregor can neither be an animal nor like one because the idea of ‘becoming’ leads us to consider the transformation of the animal qualities as well. As Deleuze states: “ In man, there exists instances of becoming-animal which do not consist of playing the dog or the cat, since the animal and the man only meet on the paths of a common [...] deterritorialization” (qtd. in Roland Bogue, 111).

Le Clézio however does include imitation and metaphor in his understanding of metamorphosis. Nevertheless, the situation of Adam and the white rat can also be considered with respect to the idea of ‘becoming’ because the interaction between the two obscures the line between ‘self’ and ‘other’ positions by interweaving human and animal qualities. The mental metamorphoses show that each side oscillates between some characteristics that are traditionally attributed to them. To clarify, man

generally acts hostile towards the animal rat which he is afraid of and disgusted by. The rat, however, is known to hide and escape from man to save its life. It is observed that the human and animal qualities are blended into each other as terror, hostility and disgust are felt both by Adam and the rat the moment they engage in a bilateral transformation. Both of them are portrayed in an in-between state because neither the animal is exactly like a man nor the man is exactly like the animal. In other words, the bilateral transformation shows that a clear-cut identification between the two is hardly possible when both are subjected to alteration. It can be suggested that Le Clézio makes use of the trope to obscure two firm positions rather than to identify them.

As I have pointed out earlier, the theme of isolation has enforcement as an external feature which defines Adam's withdrawal as an escape. Whereas Adam's conflict with the military can be regarded as a personal issue, his hallucinations and attempts to have different modes of being reveal his concern about the microcosm of society and the macrocosm. Accordingly, Adam's isolation is a voluntary choice with respect to his representative state. The previous discussion on Adam's interaction with a dog and a rat lay stress on the maddening effect of Adam's discontent with society and the human condition. That is why he is repulsive and nervous both in the department store and towards the rat.

Gradually, Adam is filled with extreme revulsion towards his own race. He addresses a crowd in the town and gives a public speech that reflects his disgust and irritation with the humankind. His passionate speech is about how humans have dominated, possessed and changed the earth in the most damaging way possible. Adam is a misanthrope who is distressed by the sameness of human beings who have

turned into nothing but TV sets. Adam's speech outlines his fears and worries about our human condition not only in modern society, but in the macrocosm as well:

Do you know something, do you want to know something? My brothers. We possess the earth, all of us, just as we are, it belongs to us. Don't you see how it resembles us? Don't you see how everything that grows on it and everything that lives on it has our faces and our style? And our bodies? And is indistinguishable from us? [...] The houses are ours, houses like caves, with holes pierced in them for our faces, full of chairs for our buttocks, beds for our backs, floors that imitate us. We are all the same, comrades. We have invented monsters –yes, monsters. Such as these television sets [...] We make use of everything, because we are the masters, the only intelligent beings in the world. There you are. The TV is us, men. It [...] captivates us, enters our eyes and ears. An umbilical cord links this object with our bellies. [...] Who knows if we may not at last again discover some tyrannosaur, some ceratosaur, some deinotherium, some huge pterodactyl bathed in blood, against which we can fight side by side. Some opportunity for sacrifice and slaughter [...] And then there will be no more TV, brothers, no more trees or animals or earth or dancers in tights; there will be only *us*, brothers, for ever, us alone! [...] You are not human beings, because you are not conscious of living in a human world. (170-173)

Adam's prophet-like words echo the experience he had with the black dog which did not offer him the opportunity to metamorphose because he could not move away from the human experience through imitation. This time Adam does not particularly refer to the microcosm of the society he lives in, but talks about the macrocosm. He defines the effect of human beings on fauna and flora as turning them all into beings and objects that resemble human kind closely. It seems that Adam makes a statement about a further metamorphosis in that he is actually connecting man, fauna and flora to inanimate beings, houses, furniture and technological gadgets. Here, Adam associates the idea of monstrosity with inanimate objects which implies the lack of human qualities in them such as the soul and consciousness. Whereas in his earlier hallucination he envisioned mankind as monsters that metamorphose into terrifying beasts, he now has a relatively much lower view of mankind, which is a dehumanized state. For this reason, his ideas of sameness and inanimateness are

closely connected to his fear of extinction because he cannot discern any sign of living forms that is not affected by human abuse.

The protagonist's discontent with modern society and humankind is also connected with the idea of categorization he dislikes. Paradoxically, a neat structuration of our social existence is one of the factors that make the world chaotic. Adam has earlier prophesied that:

Society was arranging itself in groups of specialists: That's to say the army, the Civil Service, the doctors, the butchers, the grocers, the mental-workers, the electronic engineers, [...] People were putting up buildings twenty-two storeys high and then planting television aerials on the roofs. Underground they were putting drainpipes, electrical cables, metropolitan railways. They were making the earlier chaos bristle with posts and dykes. They were digging, sinking, burning or blasting. [...] Above all there was this host of men and women, thirsting for violence and conquest. They were assembled at the world's strategic points; they were drawing maps, naming countries, writing novels or compiling atlases. (127)

In *The Interrogation*, Le Clézio's illustrates Adam's existential anguish under two main subjects. As the representative man, Adam problematizes our human condition in modern society and tries to explore different modes of being through metamorphosis. As a modern man, Adam is in conflict with the social institutions of military and psychiatry. The trope serves to demonstrate Adam's isolated state and identity transformations. From this perspective, his mental metamorphoses can be considered as an attempt to find a way out of his existential anguish. This is also evident in Adam's contemplations of the outside world in minute detail and his interest in the tiniest elements of everything. Lying on the beach, "Adam's atoms could have mingled with the atoms in the stones, and he might have been drawn down quietly through the ground, the sand, water and slime" (163). As such, it can be suggested that the more distressed Adam feels about the human condition in modern

society, the more inquisitive he becomes about the world around him. Yet, Le Clézio does not take the issue a step further. The novel ends with Adam's last mental metamorphosis when he is in his cell in the asylum: "He is inside the oyster, and the oyster is at the bottom of the sea. He still has a few bothers, of course; he will have to keep his room tidy, give samples of urine for analysis, answer test questions..." (223). Despite not being dehumanized in the monstrous way mentioned earlier, Adam eventually shrinks into a living organism that lacks limbs, consciousness and spirit. This is a case where the individual not only isolates himself completely from society, but finally sees himself as a mere living thing, no longer human.

In the next novel we will discuss, the isolation is not absolute as in Le Clézio's novel. Moreover, in Fowles's novel the protagonist does not feel dehumanized at the end. Despite these differences, the thematic concerns of the two authors as well as the way they handle metamorphosis as a trope present similarities as will be shown in the following pages.

CHAPTER 3

THE MAGUS

The events of the week-end seemed to recede, to become locked away as if I had dreamt them; and yet [...] there came the strangest feeling, compounded of the early hour, the absolute solitude, and what had happened, of having entered a myth; a knowledge of what it was like physically, moment by moment, to have been young and ancient, a Ulysses on his way to meet Circe, a Theseus on his journey to Crete, an Oedipus still searching for his destiny. I could not describe it. It was not in the least a literary feeling, but an intensely mysterious present and concrete feeling of excitement, of being in a situation where anything still might happen. As if the world had suddenly, during those last three days, been re-invented, and for me alone.

(Fowles, 157)

John Fowles's first novel *The Magus* deals with metamorphosis in an utterly different way from Le Clézio in its inquiry into the modern individual's isolation and conflicted identity. Fowles dwells upon the figurative aspect of the trope through a theatrical display of divergent personae and identities in the novel. Although *The Magus* was published after *The Collector* (1963) and *The Aristos* (1965), it is the first novel written by Fowles who had worked on it more than 15 years. First published in 1966, *The Magus* was further revised by its author. With a short introduction by Fowles, the new version of the work appeared in print in 1977, which is the version to be analyzed in the present chapter. The novel revolves around a young man's quest for selfhood in an isolated environment where he goes through various metamorphic processes. It parodies and problematizes various 'subject' positions that the individual is identified in line with certain social institutions such as family, the

army and the psychiatry. The novel also lends itself to psychoanalytic reading but these lie outside the scope of this thesis.

The young Oxford graduate Nicholas Urfe, the narrator and the protagonist of the novel, accepts a post to teach English in the Greek island of Phraxos, trying to avoid a serious relationship with his girlfriend Alison. In his friendship with the mysterious figure Maurice Conchis, Nicholas isolates himself from his former social life in London and spends most of his time in Conchis's enclosed estate in Phraxos. There he finds himself caught up in the games and masques of Conchis whose omnipotent presence and company of actors juxtapose a surrealistic realm of deception with the firm outside reality which Nicholas relies upon.

The Magus has been subjected to literary criticism in terms of its existentialist inquiry into the selfhood of the protagonist. In 1970s and 1980s, many critics considered the novel as mainly preoccupied with the moral development of the protagonist. There was an interest in approaching the godgame as a training and a tutorial experience. For example, in his article called "John Fowles: The Existential Labyrinth", Jeff Rackham asserts the idea that the novel aims at teaching Nicholas "love and honesty, two interrelated values by which he must learn to live if he is to find any meaning in life at all" (96). Barry N. Olshen also places emphasis on Nicholas's experience in Greece as an education towards recognizing his relationship with Alison as love ("John Fowles's *The Magus*: An Allegory of Self-Realization", 918). Michael Boccia views the novel in a similar way and regards the godgame as a model for "an educational process which functions through the use of art and is intended to teach people their responsibility to act in humane ways" ("Visions and Revisions: John Fowles's New Version of *The Magus*", 237). It is only natural that these critics do not merely centralize on the issues of love, morality and education in

their works but also read the novel from other aspects. Yet, they tend to propose a reductive reading of the novel by considering the godgame as mainly aiming to teach 'love' and 'morality' to Nicholas. When we consider *The Magus* from this perspective, such analyses seem insufficient to bring to the fore various other issues related to selfhood in the novel. To clarify, if we regard the godgame as a training, this will narrow down the individual's conflict with social and representational definitions. Contrary to such reductive readings, certain exceptional interpretations of the novel have been put forward with regards to the issue of selfhood in the process of becoming. In his work entitled *John Fowles, Magus and Moralist*, Peter Wolfe strives to convey a detailed analysis of the novel by touching upon diverse issues simultaneously, such as 'being vs. becoming', the quest motif, Tarot imagery and intertextual references. Although his work seems to have wealth and licence in the discussion of the novel, he disregards Fowles's interest in social institutions:

It does not study social institutions, and it does not record the impact of society upon the individual. Instead, Fowles probes inward. His working premise, as usual, is that all knowledge is self-knowledge; though he sees society as a complex web of relationships, his real interest is prime being. (82)

Contrary to what Wolfe asserts, however, Fowles actually demonstrates the link between individuality and social institutions which are closely related to the protagonist's tensions regarding his selfhood. In *The Magus*, he includes different means of knowledge and representation in the godgame such as history, mythology, fiction and autobiography. The novel's inquiry into the selfhood of the modern man is a much more complex issue than to provide the reader with an educational process on love and morality as afore mentioned. The present chapter seeks to touch upon the relation between individuality and the social institutions of family, education and in

this case military. Whereas exploring the self in *The Magus* has been examined from various perspectives, I aim to draw the connection between the figurative usage of metamorphosis and the inquiry into the selfhood of Nicholas whose social background and relationships are of great importance.

In *The Magus*, the gist of the metamorphosis is the theatrical atmosphere that overflows with symbols, doubles, doppelgangers, metaphor and imitation. Fowles builds a surreal world of role-play in which most of the characters take on different identities. Through Conchis's so-called godgame, the novel illustrates the modern individual's existential anguish when his self-assured social reality and selfhood are threatened by deceptive games and scenarios. Conchis becomes an omnipotent figure in Nicholas' life and urges him to explore selfhood outside social and representational definitions. In the godgame, Conchis brings into prominence different forms of self knowledge and representation such as autobiography, history, fiction, mythology and psychology, and creates shadowy figures, fragmented scenes and sub-plots out of them. The specific way Conchis blurs the line between reality and illusion for Nicholas is by interweaving the fragmented accounts into one another. Even if the constant shift from one identity recognition to another lays bare their being illusions and deceits, the protagonist is never sure about the reality behind the godgame: "The people I had seen, the sounds I had heard, and that vile smile, had been real, not supernatural; what was not real was the absence of any visible machinery –no secret rooms, nowhere to disappear –or of any motive. And this new dimension [...] was the most baffling of all" (156).

In this respect, the theatrical atmosphere not only embodies protean characters, but also includes the transformation of landscape and discourse as historical accounts turn into fictional stories, and autobiographical representation is

blended with drama and mythology. Therefore, Fowles demonstrates metamorphic processes not only thematically, but also textually and spatiotemporally.

The Magus portrays multiple ‘subject’ positions for the individual which are constantly altered through metamorphosis. Both literally and figuratively, the trope serves to create a slippery ground for the characters that oscillate between different identities. In the novel, Conchis appears as a deserter from the army, a former Nazi, a wealthy intellectual and a psychiatrist. As for Lily, she emerges as Conchis’s fiancé from the past, an Edwardian woman, a schizophrenic patient and Doctor Vanessa Maxwell. These roles are assigned by Conchis who keeps Nicholas in suspense as to the ‘real’ identities of the people in the godgame. The multiplicity of the stories and the role-playing bring into existence different identities and roles for the characters that remain in an in-between state on purpose. Rather than the characters, it is the protagonist who perceives them as oscillating between different identities. To clarify, the godgame aims at leaving Nicholas in doubt in terms of assigning a firm identity to the individual in social and representational definitions. In this way, Nicholas is led to a critical perception of his social relations and strong self image which are characterized by pretentiousness and egoism. Through metamorphosis, the characters not only jump from one social and representative role to another, but also transgress each ‘subject’ position. Thus, the thematic treatment of the trope demonstrates Nicholas’ quest for selfhood in a transforming atmosphere where the characters turn into ambivalent figures impersonating a diversity of identities. From this perspective, the present chapter seeks to analyze the treatment of metamorphosis in *The Magus*. The novel presents a humorously critical view on the strong self image of the individual and urges him to explore his selfhood outside institutional and representational definitions.

The Magus depicts the modern individual's isolation not as a withdrawal from social and human contact. Instead, the theme of isolation is concerned with the young protagonist's urge towards 'a new land, a new race, a new language; and [...] a new mystery' (*The Magus*, 19) which ends up in self inquiry. In this respect, the novel opens in the form of a bildungsroman in which Nicholas Urfe introduces himself. Through a parody of the older bildungsromane, Nicholas informs us about his familial, educational and personal background. The protagonist's retrospective account of his life portrays the kind of person he was before he goes through an inner transformation.

As an aspiring poet who feels dissatisfied with his life, Nicholas conveys a strong self image which is integrated into socially important structures of family, education, work and private life. He comes from a stereotypical middle-class family. Being a brigadier, his father 'was a stickler for externals and petty quotidian things; and in lieu of an intellect he had accumulated an armoury of capitalized key-words like Discipline and Tradition and Responsibility' (15). As for his mother, she 'was the very model of a would-be major-general's wife' who 'never argued with him and always behaved as if he were listening in the next room, even when he was thousands of miles away' (15). In Nicholas's account of his background, it is observed that his individuality is shaped by his family history, academic and professional accomplishments, and love affairs all of which provide a socially secure ground for him.

Before his experience in Phraxos, Nicholas regards himself as leading an ambivalent life split between his father's occupational status and his personal desires. He states: "I went on leading a double life in the army, queasily playing at being Brigadier 'Blazer' Urfe's son in public, and nervously reading *Penguin New Writing*

and poetry pamphlets in private” (16). On one hand, Nicholas feels himself under restraint with regards to his father’s military posture through which he is recognized by others. In this respect, he makes a clear-cut distinction between the pretension and actualization of his selfhood. In other words, being a brigadier’s son is a kind of pretense or a make-believe for Nicholas which leaves him in conflict. He declares that whereas he plays the role of a brigadier’s son for others, he actually tries to shape his self as independent from such recognition.

Although Nicholas desires to become a poet, his parents who ‘had nothing but a blanket contempt’ (16) for his goals disapprove him in this regard. When they die in a plane crash, Nicholas thinks that he can become a more autonomous individual and describes this experience as relieving and liberating: “I now had no family to trammel what I regarded as my real self” (16). Yet, being independent from familial bonds does not make way for self-actualization because the protagonist’s intellectual pursuits are shallow, ostentatious and self-deceptive. In the quote below, we see Nicholas as a young Oxford student and a would-be poet who reveals a self-critical approach towards his past attempts to shape his individuality with intellectual accomplishments. Ironically, his literary endeavours do not go beyond pretension and imitation because he misunderstands the nature of existentialism and takes it at face value:

We formed a small group called Les Hommes Révoltés [...] There we argued about being and nothingness and called a certain kind of inconsequential behaviour ‘existentialist’. [...] we didn’t understand that the heroes, or anti-heroes, of the French existentialist novels we read were not supposed to be realistic. We tried to imitate them, mistaking metaphorical descriptions of complex modes of feeling for straightforward prescriptions of behaviour [...] Most of us, true to the eternal dandyism of Oxford, simply wanted to look different [...] I acquired expensive habits and affected manners. I got a third-class degree and a first-class illusion: that I was a poet [...] The truth was I was not a cynic by nature; only by revolt. I had got away from what I hated,

but hadn't found where I loved, and so pretended that there was nowhere to love. (17)

The Magus problematizes the strong self-image of a bourgeois Englishman whose manners and self-perception rest solely upon pretension and imitation. Nicholas's attitude towards women whom he regards as his victims is snobbish and deceptive too. In the novel, the themes of pretentiousness and imitation reveal that Nicholas forms his individuality as dependent upon either an external authority –which is in this case his familial background- or intellectual and sexual fulfilment that ends up in deceit. For Nicholas, imitation does not provide an opportunity for self-realization because he tries to shape his selfhood by altering his appearance and behaviours rather than exploring his inner self. This is also evident in Nicholas' suicide attempt in the wilderness of the Greek island. It is seen in the lines below that the protagonist's failure in writing poetry turns into an exaggerated mental agony which is a parody of the novel:

Then I went for a walk in the hills, even though it was very cold and began to pour with rain. The whole world had finally declared itself against me. Here is something I could not shrug off, an absolute condemnation [...] Poetry had always seemed something I could turn to in need –an emergency exit, a lifebuoy, as well as a satisfaction. Now I was in the sea, and the lifebuoy had sunk, like lead. It was an effort not to cry tears of self-pity [...] I walked for hours and I was in hell. (58)

Contemplating the beauty of fauna and flora, having long solitary walks in the forest, dreaming of literary success and writing poetry, Nicholas pretends to be a Romantic hero who develops a melancholic and misanthropic posture. In this respect, Nicholas's role playing of a Romantic hero in despair indicated that the protagonist

avoids his trouble with writing poetry and turns an individual anxiety into an overstated Romantic agony.

I have already pointed out that the protagonist shapes his selfhood in line with two contradictory poles –one being dependent on the familial circle and the other on his intellectual pursuits. For Nicholas, selfhood stands between the polar opposites of subordination to and independence from the institution of family. Nicholas reflects a dualistic perception in his attitudes towards women, too, in that he prefers to play the role of the victimizer for whom the female is reduced into an object: “My ‘technique’ was to make a show of unpredictability, cynicism, and indifference. Then, like a conjurer with his white rabbit, I produced the solitary heart” (21). Another significant example in this regards is observable in the way Nicholas characterizes Alison whom he degrades as an intellectually inferior Australian woman: “Out of bed I was teaching her, anglicizing her accent, polishing off her roughness, her provincialisms” (35). So far, it is seen that Nicholas establishes his social relations on the basis of an either/or logic to provide himself with a strong ‘self’ position, which he later realizes is deceptive. Through Nicholas’s role playing, Fowles uses figurative aspect of the trope to lay bare the façade of the strong self image of the protagonist.

Whereas Nicholas associates his urge for isolation with the discontent he feels towards city life and modern society, his withdrawal into a ‘world before the machine, almost before man’ (51) is actually an escape from a confrontation with his self-centred illusions. In this respect, the novel elaborates on the quest motif to illustrate the existentialist inquiry into the selfhood of the protagonist. For Nicholas, the impulse for a new “mystery” turns into a search for selfhood which is treated through the quest motif. Resolved to discover a new “mystery”, he leaves his everyday life in London behind. In the presence of the Greek landscape, Nicholas

discerns signs of selfhood-tension and transformation in himself which he cannot fully recognize yet:

I looked down at my pale London hands. Even they seemed changed, nauseatingly alien, things I should long ago have disowned. When that ultimate Mediterranean light 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 arc-lights; already I could see the table with straps through the open doorway, already my old self began to know that it wouldn't be able to hold out. (49)

As it is seen in the above excerpt, Nicholas is on the threshold of a mystifying and challenging quest which is to take place in an isolated domain in the wilderness. Fowles draws on the mythological motif of quest as a plot device for *The Magus* in which his ordinary hero faces numerous ordeals. In this sense, the narrative pattern of Nicholas's journey resembles that of the ancient hero suggested by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. The stages of separation, initiation and return that Campbell considers as a common pattern in the hero's quest are observable in Nicholas's retrospective account. He steps out of his everyday life in London and finds himself in a mysterious world when he goes to Phraxos. Throughout the time he spends there he faces games which depend on illusion and identities of the "actors" he encounters that transform his vision of selfhood. In the end, he goes back to London as an individual whose inner self is transformed and who is ready for new beginnings. But the novel has an open ending.

In his foreword, Fowles indicates that his alternative title for the novel is 'The Godgame' that promotes the idea of an external authority. The author makes allusions to classical mythology and Shakespeare to reveal the kind of external authority Conchis establishes over Nicholas's life. Welcoming him into the domain

of Prospero, Conchis reveals his foreknowledge of Nicholas's visit which he learns from the housekeeper: "If you question Hermes, Zeus will know" (80). As such, Fowles employs intertextual references to present Conchis as a god-like figure. Although not exemplifying metamorphosis in the strict sense, the allusions turn Conchis into well-known literary and mythological figures and this is thematically related to the trope. Conchis is like Zeus in the sense that the ancient God has the power not only to shape the series of events in the mortal hero's life, but also to transform mortals as well as fauna and flora. Zeus can also transform himself, disguising under different appearances and identities by temporarily transforming his appearance. As for Prospero, he has dominion over the island and his betrayers who are led to confront their mistakes through deceptive games and tricks that blur the line between reality and illusion. Parallel to these omnipotent figures and making use of Shakespeare's favourite theme of appearance versus reality, Conchis is the creator and the manipulator of the godgame in which the characters, the chain of event and the landscape are illusionary and mutable just as in *The Tempest*. Although Conchis presents himself under divergent identities throughout the godgame, there is a stable and unique feature about him –his intense and penetrating eyes. Indeed the frequent usage of eye imagery is discernable throughout the novel: Fowles uses it as indicative of Conchis's omniscient posture. Among the numerous examples the author provides us with, the protagonist's first encounter with Conchis is of great importance. Rather than informing Nicholas about his familial, social or occupational background at first, Conchis introduces himself to him by referring to a well-known illusion I have previously mentioned. In this respect, Conchis's omniscient posture dominates the first impression of the protagonist. In the excerpt below, Nicholas

notes that the most stunning thing about his expressionless visage is his piercing eyes:

He was nearly completely bald, brown as old leather, short and spare, a man whose age was impossible to tell: perhaps sixty, perhaps seventy; [...] The most striking thing about him was the intensity of his eyes: very dark brown, staring, with a simian penetration emphasized by the remarkably clear whites; eyes that seemed not quite human [...] He had an authority, an abrupt decisiveness, that caught me off balance [...] There was something mask-like, emotion-purged, about his face. (79)

Before he meets Conchis, Nicholas learns from his colleagues in Phraxos that the old recluse is in turn supposed to be a retired musician, a former Nazi collaborationist *or* a former mayor having done his best to help people during the German Occupation. Yet, Conchis turns all these attributions into illusionary scenarios and urges Nicholas to be sceptic also the moment he specifies Conchis as belonging to any of these identities. The reason why the eye imagery is on the forefront as a distinct feature about Conchis is that he builds dominance over the protagonist by determining omniscience as his sole immutable characteristic. What is more, the eye imagery is not only predominant in Conchis's face-to-face interaction with Nicholas; throughout the novel, it is not only Nicholas who feels dominated by Conchis's piercing eyes. When alone with the protagonist, Lily asks him to be careful about his speech and bodily gestures because she feels the old man's gaze around them even if he is not physically present. Nicholas says: "Outwardly he seemed to have little interest in me, yet he watched me; even when he was looking away, he watched me; and he waited" (85).

The imagery of Conchis's eyes is a gaze which puts the person he is looking at into object position. In that, the old man's immutable gaze has a substantial impact

on Nicholas and it is through his omnipotent posture that Conchis reduces him into a participant in the godgame. Shortly after Conchis relates his past to Nicholas, he indicates that Nicholas is to be a character in the puppet master's hands: "I must warn you that this evening I give you not a narrative. But a character" (170). This can be considered as an act that undermines the selfhood of the person being gazed at because Conchis's penetrating eyes not only symbolize his being omnipotent, but also represent his omniscience. As the all-knowing creator of the godgame, Conchis pulls Nicholas into the scenarios and turns him into a participant by manipulating the series of events and his actions. For this reason, his gaze stabilizes an object position for Nicholas who is the leading character within the scenarios.

The issue of gaze has become popular in modern criticism because Lacan and Foucault have dwelled upon the notion in a distinct way. It is especially Foucault who worked upon the connection between gaze, surveillance and authority with respect to his criticism on the social mechanisms of discipline. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault points out that the idea of constantly being observed by an invisible external authority leads the individual to become his own agent of discipline. Even though the previous discussion on eye imagery does not lend itself to a particularly Foucauldian reading, his conception of surveillance is influential concerning the idea of the invisible gaze. Nicholas feels Conchis's control over himself even in his absence, and he sets himself against Conchis's surveillance which affects his actions.

In the novel, the specific way Fowles shatters the strong self image of the individual is by situating him into an enclosed domain where Conchis has the ultimate power to shape the series of events and to build illusory identities on purpose. In this respect, the author dwells upon metamorphosis as a trope to confront the protagonist with his self-deceptive pursuits. Overcrowded with metaphors,

symbols, fictional and ‘factual’ data, literary and mythological allusions, the godgame problematizes Nicholas’s dualistic posture towards his own individuality and his relationships with other subjects. In Conchis’s memories of the time he spent in the army, the novel takes us back to 1915 when he becomes a war deserter. Conchis feels discouraged to tell the truth to his father and fiancée Lily thinking that they would show disapproval: “The idea of heroic sacrifice had contaminated her, as it has contaminated my father” (121). On the horns of a dilemma, he invents a new story about what happened in wartime. He not only pretends to be discharged from the army, but also disguises under the identity of a higher military rank:

So I said that I had been lucky in a draw to leave, and that now Montague was dead I was to rejoin my original battalion. I grew possessed by madness to deceive [...] I invented a new battle of Neuve Chapelle, as if the original had not been bad enough. I even told them I had been recommended for commission [...] The time I spent alone with her ...those hours allowed me to gather strength to go on with my deception [...] I put on my uniform and let my father and mother and Lily see me off at Victoria. They believed I had to report to a camp near Dover. (148-150)

Being a deserter leads Conchis to alter his identity for others, and the figurative usage of the trope brings to the forefront the issue that existing social norms and concepts of selfhood affect the way one shapes his/her identity. Conchis’s purposeful transformation into a brave soldier and a would-be commissioner lays bare the inferior situation of a deserter. On the other hand, strength, courage or patriotic feelings are attributes of manliness in society and this is seen in Lily’s response to what actually happened. For her, Conchis’s selfhood is reduced to whether he becomes a deserter or bravely returns to the front to be spiritually healed:

Love is the mystery between two people, not identity. We were at the opposite poles of humanity, Lily was humanity bound to duty, unable to choose, suffering, at the mercy of social ideals. Humanity both crucified and

marching towards the cross. And I was free, [...] determined to survive, whatever the cost. (152)

In the case of Conchis, the trope puts emphasis on the theme of pretention and thus reveals the link between self recognition and social norms. The conflict between an individual's identifying himself either as a deserter or as a good soldier underlies a binary posture towards selfhood. In addition to this, the novel builds a parallelism between Conchis's oral autobiography and Nicholas's past in London as concerns the theme of pretense. In both situations the individual disguises under a deceptive identity when he faces the social norms the institution of family supports. While Nicholas's conflict is with regards to his father's occupation which forces a military posture on the protagonist, the young Conchis is split between approval by his close relations and being frowned upon his autonomous decision. This parallelism is constructed to make Nicholas come to terms with his own make-believe. In her article "Myth, Mystery and Irony", Roberta Rubenstein considers the issue of confrontation I have just mentioned in a very similar way. Yet, she suggests that "Nicholas is brought to an "existential" confrontation with himself –by being shown the nature of his personality as it appears to the others, and his delusory freedom" (331) towards the end of the novel. The particular example she puts emphasis on is the interrogative masque near the end of the novel. When compared to Rubenstein's close reading, the previous analysis on Conchis's past shows that the goal of the godgame becomes more conspicuous towards the end. Whereas Conchis's oral narrative reveals Nicholas's make-believe implicitly, the interrogative mask offers an apparent confrontation.

Deliberately manipulating his oral narrative, Conchis not only makes explicit his pretensions in wartime, but he also manipulates Nicholas to regard the whole story as an illusion. By blurring the line between reality and illusion, he aims to lead Nicholas not to take matters at face value. Therefore, he blends autobiography with fiction and further creates a fictional present for the protagonist by including Lily Montgomery in the godgame.

Presented neither as a supernatural being nor a ghost, Lily appears as a young girl in authentic clothing who is an exact copy of the black and white photograph of Conchis's dead fiancée:

She was wearing a wide-collared blue-and-white striped dress, [...] She had a ravishingly pretty face, but completely untanned, without any make-up, and her hair, her outline, the upright way she held herself, everything about her was of forty years before. I knew I was supposed to be looking at Lily. It was unmistakably the same girl as in the photographs; [...] The Botticelli face; grey-violet eyes. (155)

In drawing an ambivalent picture in Nicholas's mind as to who Lily is, Conchis first shows him the photo and then introduces to him the young woman who is described in the quote above as an amnesiac and schizophrenic patient who thinks that she is his dead fiancée:

[...] and just another wild idea was beginning to run through my mind, that she was really an amnesiac, some beautiful amnesia he had, somehow literally and metaphorically laid his hands on, she gave me what was beyond any doubt a contemporary look, a look out of role –a quick, questioning glance that flicked from me to Conchis's averted head and back again. At once I had the impression that we were two actors with the same doubts about the director. (179)

In *The Magus*, Fowles presents us with an outdoor theatre which provides a metamorphosing atmosphere for the protagonist. After Nicholas meets Lily, his

situation as the sole audience of the godgame turns into that of participant. He starts to form relationships with the characters in the godgame. He becomes Lily's lover and faces further identity transformations in his relationship with her, too. Both Lily and the context they are involved in alter many times, and Nicholas is in a world where instability prevails.

In this respect, the novel casts doubt upon a dualistic classification of selfhood by deferring the protagonist's attempt to ascertain the 'real' identity of the individuals in the godgame as opposed to their apparent identity. In the introduction, I have pointed out that metamorphosis as a trope has been employed in numerous different ways such as shape shifting, role reversal and metaphor. Hence, metamorphosis is an umbrella term that cannot be reduced to a single definition in that the multiplicity of themes and techniques with regards to the trope brings along a concomitant alteration of the term itself. The on-going process of identity transformation in *The Magus* shows that metamorphosis is not only a means for self inquiry, but the novel encourages us to see metamorphosis as an ongoing process. Rather than illustrating the protagonists' inner transformation, the trope pulls to the forefront certain social and representative descriptions in line with which the individual shapes his identity. *The Magus* breaks Nicholas from his attempts to impose a meaningful pattern on his experience.

Even if the personae in the godgame do not undergo any inner transformation or manifest metamorphosis in the traditional sense, the constant shift of symbols and data leads Nicholas to alter his ideas on the identity and past of the characters. He is led to perceive the universe as a metamorphosing phenomenon and his selfhood as "becoming" rather than "being". Hence, the pivotal idea beneath the theme of self

inquiry is to free the individual from the social and representational categories Nicholas had originally attempted to shape his individuality relationships with others.

By way of presenting metamorphosis as a process of becoming for Nicholas, Fowles encourages us to consider the individual's experience outside binary categories. The protagonist is urged to confront his self-deceptions which reveal a dualistic view of individuality. Instead, Nicholas should perceive his life and relationships as open to change and exploration. As Conchis points out: "There comes a time in each life like a point of fulcrum. At that time you must accept yourself. It is not any more what you will become. It is what you are and always will be. You are too young to know this. You are still becoming. Not being" (109).

Conchis's godgame faces Nicholas with an illusory display of numerous personae together with changes in the landscape and context. Intertextual references and theatrical devices give Fowles the opportunity to extend transformation onto textual and spatiotemporal grounds. For example, a military interrogation room transforms into a psychiatry clinic which turns out to be part of an outdoor theatre stage in the end. In this respect, the narrative not only displays a shift in the setting, but also involves a distinct change in language usage. The narrative enters the discourse of such institutions in which the individual is defined as a mental patient or a prisoner of war and placed below the rank of the doctor or the soldier. Each spatiotemporal and textual metamorphosis serves to leave the individual's selfhood in an in-between state since he oscillates between the two selves with which he formerly identified. It becomes impossible for the individual to acknowledge himself as a mental patient or a war prisoner so he eventually metamorphoses into another persona.

What emerges at the end is that Nicholas has to explore his old 'self' before he goes one step further to transform his identity:

The mess of my life, the selfishnesses and false turnings and the treacheries, all these things could fall into place, they could become a source of construction rather than a source of chaos, and precisely because I had no other choice. It was certainly not a moment of new moral resolve, or anything like it. No doubt our accepting what we are must always inhibit our being what we ought to be; for all that, it felt like a step forward –and upward.
(164)

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Within the scope of this thesis, I have discussed the existential anguish and painful inquiry into the selfhood of the isolated modern individual in two twentieth century novels, *The Interrogation* by J. M. G. Le Clézio and *The Magus* by John Fowles. Both authors dwell upon metamorphosis as a trope to illustrate the crises undergone by the protagonist regarding his selfhood and to depict his existential anguish in an isolated environment. Throughout the introduction, various examples of metamorphosis have been alluded to in order to illustrate the versatility of the trope. Both literally and figuratively, metamorphosis has been used in widely divergent ways. In the traditional sense, the literal metamorphosis is to the forefront which can best be exemplified in mythology, folk tales, fairy tales and fantastic literature. The introduction further pointed the figurative use of metamorphosis in various literary genres such as poetry, drama and the novel. The manifold uses to which the trope has been put shows us that there is no clear-cut distinction between the literal and figurative modes of metamorphosis because many authors have dealt with the trope by using the two aspects in close association.

Le Clézio and Fowles present the reader with distinct examples of metamorphic processes which include identity transformation together with that of the landscape and time. By dint of removing the individual away from the society in which he lives, Le Clézio and Fowles focus on the inquiry into selfhood beyond the limits of social and representational definitions. The two novels have a common interest in certain issues such as isolation, anxieties concerning selfhood and identity transformation.

The theme of isolation is of great importance in both novels because the individual's existential anguish is closely related to his decision to withdraw from society. A comparative reading of the novels reveals that the issue of isolation is dealt with from different standpoints. The major reason of this difference is that the protagonists present dissimilar portraits of the modern individual. In *The Interrogation*, Le Clézio characterizes his protagonist who is possibly an amnesiac and/or mad as the representative of the human condition and at the same time a condition in which man has been reduced to madness. Adam Pollo's isolation has as its cause two major conflicts – conflict with institutional authority and conflict with chaotic modern society. Thus, Le Clézio considers the issue of isolation from two different angles: Adam withdraws from society not only because he tries to avoid a possible arrest, but also because he feels discontented with the consumer society. The treatment of metamorphosis is bound up with the crisis of selfhood experienced by Adam Pollo, the amnesiac madman as well as with the existential anguish of the representative man.

Whereas Le Clézio employs amnesia and madness to depict Adam's identity transformations and hallucinations, John Fowles foregrounds theatricality in *The Magus* to demonstrate the ambivalent identity of his protagonist and the mutable personae, events and environment in the godgame. Fowles centres the narrative around an ordinary Englishman and presents his discontent with society and his intellectual desires in an ironic manner, portraying Nicholas as a self-centred young bourgeois who shapes his sense of selfhood through role playing and imitation. The novel explores Nicholas's voluntary exile through the quest motif of ancient myths so as to shatter the deceptive self image of the protagonist. Contrary to Le Clézio, Fowles makes use of the self-imposed exile motif to present an alternative world of

illusory scenarios and ambivalent identities. For Nicholas, the experience of isolation turns into existential anguish because the godgame threatens his self-assurance and what he takes to be social reality. Nicholas starts to question the ontological status of what is happening to him and around him as Conchis pulls him into an atmosphere which metamorphoses before the eyes of Nicholas, a constantly shifting world where the individuals seem to possess numerous different identities simultaneously. The godgame puts under scrutiny various social and representational roles and debunks Nicholas's attempts to identify the individual with a stable subject position. Through theatricality and role playing, metamorphosis as a trope is used in the godgame to transform the identity of the characters, the landscape and the concept of time. In this way, Nicholas is not only led to confront his own role playing, but also encouraged to consider the self as protean and in the process of "becoming" rather than stable and immutable.

Though they use different approaches and narrative techniques, Le Clézio and Fowles build both fragmentary narratives in which different and shifting accounts, events, landscapes and timescapes are interwoven into each other. Through this kind of narration which shatters the stability of setting and time and with the help of spatiotemporal transformations, a sense of in-betweenness manifests itself in the individuals' experiences. In *The Interrogation*, Le Clézio obscures any fixed sense of selfhood for Adam right at the beginning. Starting *in medias res*, the author leaves it uncertain whether Adam has escaped from the military or from an asylum before he breaks into an empty seaside villa. Moreover, the author builds a parallelism between Adam's troubled mental state and the storyline as the narration is made up of disjointed accounts that include flashbacks and foreshadowings about Adam's life. Fowles on the other hand begins *The Magus* as a linear narrative in which Nicholas

informs us about his familial and social background. However, the illusory scenarios and shadowy figures in the godgame disrupt the linearity of this narrative by intermingling stories from present and past times. The metamorphoses in the landscape and shifting timescapes, as in Le Clézio reinforce the idea of ambivalence with respect to the selfhood and identity of the protagonist and of the other characters.

Moreover, both Le Clézio and Fowles cast doubt upon a firm sense of selfhood for the individual based on existing institutional norms. Both authors depict the link between certain social institutions (such as family, education and military) and selfhood, calling into question the extent to which these institutions affect the forming of individuality. Adam's conflict with institutional authority is related to his rejection of a subject position within the military. As for Nicholas, he is recognized as the son of a brigadier by others and his acceptance of such a role leaves him in conflict with his personal desires. Le Clézio and Fowles both prefer to leave the individual's selfhood in an in-between state by portraying these identities as oscillating between different poles. What emerges from the treatment of metamorphosis in these two works is that they encourage the reader to be critical about approaching individuality in line with dualistic categories such as self/other, insane/sane, sense/nonsense, victim/victimizer and reality/illusion. To achieve this, the authors present us with numerous transformations of selfhood for Adam and Nicholas respectively, each metamorphosis leading the individual to identify with altering selves or positions

Consequently, the inquiry into selfhood in both *The Interrogation* and *The Magus* is achieved through metamorphosis which promotes the idea of instability and "becoming" for the individual. When we compare the ending of the two novels, it is

seen that Le Clézio presents mental metamorphoses as a way of escape for Adam who in this way withdraws from the outside world. Fowles on the other hand puts forward a more hopeful vision for the modern man whose return to London is a kind of beginning because Nicholas has the potential to shape his individuality as a person in the process of experiencing life and still becoming.

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