



## A Freudian Reading of John Fowles' “The Ebony Tower”

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### Abstract

Drawing on Freud's three aspects of the psyche, this paper explores the two character-triangles in John Fowles's “The Ebony Tower.” Henry Breasley, Anne and Diana on one hand and David Williams, Beth and Diana on the other are respectively tied up to the Ego, Super ego and Id. The paper negotiates how the novella can be seen as a fictionalization of the quest of the ego to satisfy the artist's urge for creativity which can potentially be realized by romancing the id drive. The artist's innovative elocution can either be hindered or helped by its inevitable contact with realm of the id where repressed desires restlessly reside. In effect, not only does the Freudian conceptualization better illustrate the triangle character relationships but it uncovers the anxieties of the artist's psyche.

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John Fowles' “The Ebony Tower” (1974) introduces two character-triangles which speak to Freud's three aspects of the psyche. Henry Breasley, Anne and Diana on one side and David Williams, Beth and Diana on the other are respectively tied up to the ego, super-ego and the id. In “A Personal Note,” Fowles points out that “The working title of this collection of stories was Variations, by which I meant to suggest variations both on certain themes in previous books of mine and in methods of narrative presentation” (117). Indeed, this aspect of “variations” can be considered as a variation within the psyche through the structure of the Freudian topology. This paper argues that conceptualizing the triangle-character relationships through the Freudian model unravels the anxieties of the artist's psyche and how these dormant apprehensions or variations impact the creative energy of the artist and his or her conception of reality and art. In this sense, the novella can be read as a dramatization of the ego in search of the other components in order to revitalize

the artist's psyche. The artist's creative enunciation entails venturing into the realm of the id which is the source of repressed desires.

In his *Sigmund Freud: Examining the Essence of his Contribution* (2008), Richard Stevens speaks of how, according to Freud, integration defines the mental and psychological progression that grows out of the way we perceive the world. In this sense, selection and integration are defining factors that determine who we are: "We structure and integrate them [courses of action] into a coherent and characteristic style of life" (Stevens 1-2). Freud's accomplishment was to recognize that the act of selection and integration for the psyche is what constitutes personal awareness: "Humans then are governed by biological processes and psychological needs but their capacity for symbolic thinking also enables them to 'internalize' the world in which they live" (Stevens 4). Being aware of their limits and desires, humans assimilate these factors "which stem from these three sources – biological processes, direct experience and social context" that "are often difficult to reconcile with each other and this may create conflict within a person" (Stevens 4). As a result, the shifting interplay between internal and external forces determines individual personality. Freud's concern was to examine how much of this interaction functions at the unconscious level. The id, ego, and super-ego are the three theoretical constructs that define Freud's model of the psyche, which mobilize a person's mental life and daily activity. This actualization of consciousness unfolds itself in Fowles' novella through representational conversations and interactions between two male artists, Henry and David, mainly over the impinging force of a third entity, Diana, whose presence looms large, intrudes on their personal lives and directs their creative energy.

Freud views personality as a site of conflict among three mental forces. The ego, to start with, is a representation of the reality principle, which is a mediator between the urges of the id and the restrictions of the super-ego. The ego stages how a person interacts with the realities of the external world: "The ego, according to Freud, is in doubly conflicted position. The first conflict is in relation to the id. The ego is charged with perception, reality-testing, satisfying one's desires under the constraints of accurate beliefs about the world ... The ego's second conflict is in relation to the superego, which confronts the ego for falling in too much with the id's wishes" (Lear 185). Freud stresses the function of the ego as a dramatization of conscious awareness which determines our sense of reality and regulates a person's interactions with the world: "The ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world ... The ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions ... in its relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse" (Freud 636). In Fowles' "The Ebony Tower," Henry Breasley serves as a dramatization of the ego that spurns the norms of the external world and snubs holding horses of desire in check and, therefore, subverts the Freudian expectations of the function of the ego.

Throughout the novella, Breasley is called the “old devil” (10), “bastard” (13), “tyrant” (53) and “sadistic old shit” (104), which betrays his state of nonchalance towards the public opinion. As “an old-fashioned and half-articulate Bohemian maverick” (Conradi 80), Breasley is conscious of his self-imposed banishment from anything English. His intense awareness of his identity and control over his beliefs render him quite in touch with his own conception of the external world. For instance, he is fully aware of himself as a born artist: “My dear boy. Painted to paint. All my life. Not to give clever young buggers like you a chance to show off. Like shitting, yes?” (79). Breasley, therefore, serves as an allegorical subversion of the ego that “has been modified by the direct influence of the external world” (Freud 636). Not quite impressed by what he sees, he attacks contemporary art as the commonly accepted form to view reality and dismisses it as “the age of institutionalized amnesia” (Conradi 80). Fowles portrays Breasley as an artist who is aesthetically and politically conscious of the world that is already growing too much with him: “Breasley had been well ahead of the politicians. To the British the 1942 exhibition suddenly made sense; they too had learned what war was about, of the bitter folly of giving the benefits of the doubt to international fascism” (11). Arguably, to be able to release the “superior strength of the horse” (Freud 636), which Freud identifies with the power of the id and Breasley correlates with the artistic energy is to hold on to Diana who is envisioned to be a human incarnation of aesthetic inspiration.

Another artist introduced in the story is David Williams whose ordinary life is interrupted by “the invitation from the publishers to write the biographical and critical introduction of *The Art of Henry Breasley*” (19). The journey becomes to David “as symbolic as realistic, the young man receives the opportunity for growth and development, which nevertheless he fails to achieve” (Foster 92). Like Breasley, he is another representation of the ego especially in the sense that the ego “is the aspect of the mind’s functioning which is responsible for reality testing, that is for rational thinking, and for checking what it is safe to do in a given physical and social environment” (Bocock 54). There is this tendency, right from the opening page, to dissociate him from the creative impulse as represented by nature and, instead, plunge him into a world of facts and consistency: “Though there was some indication of the formal origin in these verbal notes – that a stripe of colour was associated with a field, a sunlit wall, a distant hill – he drew nothing. He also wrote down the date, the time of day and the weather, before he drove on.” (9). However, David’s understanding of art as a dramatization of “the external world” is significantly different. For instance, half way through his stay, David “had experienced a little tinge of personal disappointment, finally, with Breasley; a little too much posing and wicked old sham for the end-product, too great a dissonance between the man and his art” (34). Breasley sees contemporary art as a “looming threat,” David believes that “an intelligent pluralism, a toleration of all styles” is the answer to the battle between realism and abstraction

(Conradi 80). They are both conscious of the fact that they represent distinct schools of art and hence different lifestyles and ways to aesthetically converse with the external world. In “A Conversation With John Fowles,” Fowles speaks to Robert Foulke about a clear-cut distinction between an idiosyncratic historian and a sheer academic and how he is favorably disposed towards the former: “I must confess that, if I were asked to make a choice, I’d say I really much prefer the rather old-fashioned narrative historians of the past, with all their prejudices and idiosyncrasies, to the highly scientific historiographical studies that proliferate in the modern academy especially” (367). This view is largely reflected in the way Breasley and David are delineated and artistically inclined. In effect, these two protagonists’ different perspective of art informs their dealings with the id. Like Breasley, however, David is captivated by Diana whose attractiveness is both disruptive and intrusive.

The id is a composite of the psyche which constitutes the pleasure principle: “The id, lurking below, is the source of all desire and instincts and supplies the energy for the unconscious. It contains repressed material, but not everything in the id is repressed” (Muckenhoupt 125). In Freud’s formulation, the id is unconscious, lurking and always lying in wait:

*It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality... and most of this is of a negative character and can be described only as a contrast to the ego. We all approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations ... It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts ... a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle.* (New Introductory Lectures 91)

In order to resolve psychological tension, the id shapes itself in different unidentified forms that the ego cannot readily recognize, which prevents any precautionary intervention on the part of the super-ego. The id, for instance, can be mistaken to be tame and timid but is actually predatory in essence. As a case in point, Diana’s nick-name is sexually suggestive: “The mouse is an ancient female sex symbol, the muse woman’s creative aspect” (Huffaker 122). In this sense, Diana symbolizes the passion that artists need in order to preserve the creative edge.

The reference to the small rodent itself can be quite suggestive from a Freudian perspective. The Rat Man is one of the historical cases that Freud studied. It was a name that Freud used to refer to a patient obsessed with fear of a certain method of torture that, he was told, was exercised in the Far East: “The victim was tied down and a pot filled with rats strapped to his buttocks. With no other means of getting out, the rats eventually began to gnaw their way through the victim’s anus. The Rat Man was appalled, but also fascinated by this story, and found it impossible to get it out of his mind ... Immediately the idea that the rat-torture would be inflicted on his father and on the woman he loved came forcefully into his mind and could not be dislodged” (Rennison

61). He was obsessed with the terrifying idea that the rats would get his father or the woman he cared for which is extremely upsetting. He believed that something would harm his woman unless he undertakes some action. Arguably, Breasley can be named as the Mouse Man who is similarly obsessed, and yet fairly exempt from any equally severe personality disorder symptoms, with the terror that he will lose Diana someday “‘Couldn’t do without her, really’” (29). Hypothetically Breasley is likewise “tied down,” “appalled” and “fascinated” in the way he generally behaves, “He’s a child, really. He needs toys. Like affection. So he can try and smash it to bits” (38) or in the way he overreacts against abstraction: “I call it betrayal. Greatest betrayal in the history of art” (45). Conquering the rodent-anxiety is equally fulfilling and liberating for Breasley as it carries artistic implications and ensures inspiration whereas the terror of losing Diana can be similarly devastating and paralyzing.

Diana is a talented art student who is strangely attractive and dubbed the mouse because, as Breasley explains to David, her nickname is a corruption of muse, with the o a symbolic representation of the vulva. For Breasley inspiration is inseparable from sex” (Foster 93). As Diana’s name suggests the presence of both the mouse (sex) and the muse (art), she represents the id as an instinctive drive that correlates with the creative impulse. Diana also stands for fervent love as she has come from a tragic love affair with Tom. She is the creative agency that all artists seek to maintain productivity and that is why Breasley associates her with the Greek Goddess of inspiration or freedom: “Both aloof and sensitive, self-possessed and self-conscious, and apparently nothing like his wife, Diana becomes for David an especially evocative art object representative of an aesthetic and sexual ideal” (Lenz 145). Like any mythical figure, Diana transcends reality and becomes an imperative aesthetic drive rather than just a sought-after love affair.

According to Roman mythology, Diana is the goddess of the hunt and an emblem for chastity. The Greek equivalent is Artemis who transformed the hunter Actaeon into a stag because he saw Artemis bathing in a pool. He was devoured by his own hounds (Berens 102). The text makes frequent references to the erotic energy that the lake, that the girls visit, generates: “It was much more a small lake than a pool ... The girls stopped near the end, and the Mouse began to peel off her jersey. When it was off she turned it outside out again, then dropped and unhooked her bra ... The Mouse reached down her jeans and briefs together, separated them, put them beside the rest of her clothes” (59-60). And again, David declined Breasley’s invitation to “Keep ‘em company” as the two women slipped naked into the lake (59). The scene of slipping into water is reintroduced when David, like Actaeon, watched “the Mouse wading into the water; Diana ... stepped sideways before going deeper” (73). From a psychoanalytical point of view, Actaeon can be a representation of the ego that has succumbed to its own id and incurred disaster. It is a representation of the battle between reason and desire, which Fowles seems to have well explored in terms of how David chooses between family and art whose human

correlatives are respectively Beth and Diana. Notably enough, “William’s art reflects his life, which is cautious and conventional but not satisfying to him” (Aubrey 111). However, if David were to succumb to Diana’s attractiveness, like Actaeon, he would have been enslaved by his id instinctual drives. Consequently, he would have lost his family and incurred a devouring sense of guilt. Another significant Greek allusion is how Diana is portrayed to be the wine giver, which signifies a rising assertion of her position in relation to the pleasure principle and the creative edge. In the novella, the Mouse is always refilling and pouring “more wine” (48) and again “the Mouse poured red wine from a bottle without a label for David” (40) and on another occasion David “watched her pour a similar one for herself ... and finally a whisky ... poured with care” (36). This act of wine-pouring in Greek mythology is associated with Dionysus who is the Greek god of grape harvest and ecstasy (Berens 139). Moreover, Fowles sets Daina in sharp contrast against Anne: “She was in that sense much more perverse than Anne. Yet the real repression must be of a normal sexuality, a femaleness that cried out for” (92). The notion that she becomes a repressed entity connects her more readily to the id as a repressed aspect of the psyche.

Diana provides equal representation for David’s id as she becomes almost irresistible to him: “William’s sexual attraction to Diana releases and concentrates broader energies and stimulates insights which transcend their sexual origins” (Holmes 27). She serves as a transforming inventive power that artists aspire to gain. She circuitously inflicts him with a moral dilemma where he has to face the pressures of external reality as the narrator observes: “No amount of reading and intelligent deduction could supplant the direct experience” (4). Fowles explained in an interview in 1981 that if David had chosen Diana, he “might have become a better artist, but he would have betrayed his moral being. I’m pointing out that being an artist is an appallingly selfish business; the story is really about the problems, the agonies of being an artist” (Acheson 50). Guilt in this context becomes inevitable either way. Abandoning art for the sake of morality invokes feelings of guilt, which triggers intervention on the part of the super-ego. Freud argues that “the super-ego is constantly watching every one of the ego’s moves and punishes it with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inferiority” (New Introductory Lectures 89). In this sense, Diana incurs guilty pleasure feelings because she invokes the aesthetic and acquisitive experience that can either be luxuriously realized or regrettably abandoned.

The super-ego, the third aspect of Freud’s structural theory of the psyche, is closely linked to the ego and id. When first introduced in 1923 “Freud was able to conceptualize the dual work of the earlier notion of ego. The superego becomes the censor; it can carry out this work of censorship either consciously or unconsciously. It also becomes the part of the mind which carries the ego-ideal and which criticizes the failure of the person to live up to these ideals” (Bocock 54). It voices authority in terms of asserting ideals, values, and it

prohibits instinctive drives and fantasies: “The Super-ego can be thought of as a type of conscience that punishes misbehavior with feelings of guilt. For example: having extra-marital affairs” (Reber et al. 2009, 89). The ego is quite defenceless against the urges of the id without the presence of the super-ego to filter the socially unwanted and undesirable drives. Beth can be seen as David’s super-ego in the Freudian sense: “The super-ego retains the character of the father, while … the more rapidly it [ego] succumbs to repression, the stricter will be the domination of the super-ego over the ego later on – in the form of conscience or perhaps of an unconscious sense of guilt” (Freud 42). From the very off set, David’s sense of guilt is associated with Beth: “He felt a little guilty to be enjoying himself so much, to be here so unexpectedly alone, without Beth” (9). Later on, the same feeling recurs: “But he was being unfair to Beth” (34). The super-ego represents the conscience as it strives to maintain a sense of morality and follows the demands of social protocols and convenience. Accordingly, the super-ego “acts like an internal censor, causing us to make moral judgments in light of social pressures … Overall, the superego manifests itself through punishment. If allowed to operate at its own discretion, the superego will create an unconscious sense of guilt and fear” (Bressler 127). It exercises a parental/Oedipal authority.

Beth becomes inadvertently an enactment of the role of the conscience which Freud links with the super-ego: “It was just Beth’s conscience, that old steak of obstinacy in her – and a little hangover of guilt, he suspected, from her brief mutiny against the tyranny of children” (34). There is a time when David wishes Beth was there: “He wished Beth were there” (35). Beth’s name re-emerges: “He thought of Beth again: how she would have adored this being plunged straight into the legend … the wicked old faun and his famous afternoons” (12). Other times, however, when there is ecstasy, he is glad that she is way: “It had been an extraordinary evening; and for the first time he was glad that Beth hadn’t been there. She would have found it too much, flown off the handle probably” (52). In this sense, Beth functions as David’s guardian against his whims which dramatizes the role that the super-ego exercises in the psyche. Freud further explains the mechanism of the super-ego as a punishing monitor:

*When the ego is personified, it is like a slave to three harsh masters: the id, the super-ego, and the external world. It has to do its best to suit all three, thus is constantly feeling hemmed by the danger of causing discontent on two other sides. It is said, however, that the ego seems to be more loyal to the id, preferring to gloss over the finer details of reality to minimize conflicts while pretending to have a regard for reality. But the super-ego is constantly watching every one of the ego’s moves and punishes it with feelings of guilt, anxiety, and inferiority.* (New Introductory Lectures 89)

When David loses himself into a world of ecstasy, Beth, in his mind, represents a disruptive and binding force: “In some way the atmosphere of Coet reminded him of the days before Beth had entered his life” (54). He fancies a world free of Beth where he can give vent to his urges: “but if he hadn’t been married, if Beth ... that is to say, if Beth did not sometimes have certain faults” (63). Without Beth, as David has vulnerably and helplessly fallen into the charms of Diana, the super-ego does no longer exercise authority over the id:

*He analysed what he had so rapidly begun to find attractive about her – why that precise blend of the physical and the psychological, the reserved and the open, the controlled and the uncertain, called so strongly to something in his own nature ... He felt a little bewitched, possessed; and decided it must be mainly the effort of being without Beth.* (74)

Without the intervening and overarching omnipresence of Beth, David feels beguilingly attracted towards Diana. In Breasley’s case, however, Anne can be seen as a variation of Freud’s conceptualization of the super-ego.

Arguably, Anne can be considered as a representation of Breasley’s super-ego that subverts the Freudian conception of the authoritative role of the super-ego itself. Breasley names her “The Freak,” which is after all an alias for an outsider to society. Like the unconscious, she is hard to understand and not open to others. Diana tells David “Now you have to learn Anne. She’s more difficult than me” and David “doubted whether he would ever ‘learn’ her” (39). Freud explores the double characteristic of the super-ego which allows the ego to choose its own superlative representation. Although it might not be the ethically correct choice, the chosen representation of the super-ego can still concurrently play a show of conformity. To Freud, the super-ego “represents an energetic reaction-formation ... Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precepts; ‘You ought to be like this’ ... it also comprises the prohibition: ‘You may not be like this’” (Freud 75). Considering the possibility of this dual feature, Anne can be Breasley’s “energetic reaction-formation.” In this sense, she is the super-ego of a rebel who consciously does not conform to society and, therefore, Anne becomes a projection of his understanding of that society that he moulded after his own vision: “The public was more interested in the bohemian side of it – the stories of his drinking and his women, as transmitted in the spasmodic hounding he got from the yellower and more chauvinistic side of Fleet Street ... The rumours and realities of his unregenerate life-style, like his contempt for his homeland” (17). In other words, Anne conforms to the society he likes to create and live in. Anne becomes his own projection of reality the way Diana is the projection of the ideal because she represents the unattainable too: “(Diana) is initially distant and mysteriously attractive; the Freak, a skinny refugee from the drug scene, is ... with an air of easy availability. One is ideal, the other is reality” (Huffaker 119). Reality is the centre of Breasley’s consciousness; he is a man of the world: “When David

replies that abstract art is concerned with the mind instead, Breasley directly attacks his sexuality, even questioning his wife's happiness" (Huffaker 120). As a representation of Breasley's view of reality, Anne is justifiably the Freak, "for to become authentic, the artist must live his life as independently of other people as possible" (Acheson 51). In this context, Anne serves as a representation of Freud's "energetic reaction-formation" in the way she functions as Breasley's super-ego that 'You may not be like this'; a super-ego that may not necessarily conform to his society's acceptability, norms and expectations.

The aspect of duality reoccurs when Freud introduces the notion of Narcissism. In 1914, he wrote a paper titled "On Narcissism." Narcissus, a Greek mythical figure, was an attractive young man who was fascinated by his own image in the water. The narcissistic trait in Breasley's character is evidently clear in terms of self-indulgence and how he is favorably disposed towards self-expression: "The old man's secret, not letting anyone stand between self and expression; which wasn't a question of outward artistic aims, mere styles and techniques and themes. But how you did it; how wholly, how bravely you faced up to the constant recasting of yourself" (108). The two aspects of self and expression in Breasley's world mirror person and image in the Narcissus myth. From a psychoanalytical perspective, however, Freud suggests that "if all of a person's libido, or sexual energy, is attached to another person, the result is infatuation; if it is attached to the self, the result is narcissism. Freud accounted for narcissism in terms of the movement of sexual energy. There can be 'ego libido,' directed toward the self, he maintained, as well as 'object libido,' which seeks external sexual pleasure" (Muckenhoupt 115). This aspect of the dual nature of pleasure persists in Freud's instinctual theory, which "suggested that there are two sets of instincts – an instinct towards pleasure and an instinct towards self-preservation – which work together despite their opposite aims" (Muckenhoupt 84). Drawing on this theoretical framework, Anne can be seen as a portrayal of another set of instincts, which partly helps explain her sensual and provocative attributes. From this perspective, she functions as a dramatization of Breasley's indulgence in self-love and self-preservation. Noticeably enough, for instance, at the time Diana speaks of Breasley's "extraordinary quality. A kind of magic," the Freak reduces that overstatement by referring to the sheer act of self-preservation: "Anyway, it's more like nursing" (67). Moreover, Anne explains how Breasley and she are so much alike that Diania is actually the one who is oddly different: "In a funny sort of way Di's the odd one out. Old Henry and me, we kind of live from day to day. Know what I mean. We couldn't be innocent if we tried. Di's the other way round." (73). Even David points out how he changed his first negative impression of Anne, when he noticed a state of perseverance and tenacity, "an affectionateness beneath the flip language – an honesty ... something that had been got the hard way, by living the 'bloody mess'" (72). Since Henry is not interested in abstractions that veil the grim face

of reality, the function of the super-ego that filters only the appropriate aide of reality is disabled. Nevertheless, conceptualizing Anne as a representation of the super-ego continues to intriguingly stigmatize and challenge the Freudian conception of this aspect of the psyche.

It is worthy noticing how Freud defines the relation between the ego and the super-ego in terms of child and parent since “the individual’s super-ego in the course of its development takes over contributions from later successors and substitutes of his parents, such as teachers, admired figures in public life, or high social ideals” (Fodor and Gaynor 150). Anne is the super-ego but as divorced from its Oedipal situation. It is formed out of the id and the earliest attachments of personality growth: “The super-ego measures the real ego of a person against an ego ideal – an ideal image of the self that is based on the earliest narcissistic self-love, before a recognition of any flaws in the self” (Thurschwell 91). There are only few glimpses in which Anne can be seen as the orthodox super-ego that exercises some control over the old man and Diana. Sometimes she is monitoring the Mouse’s moves, “The mouse came back with the third bottle, and the Freak looked nervously up at her, as if her permission was needed” (44). At other times, the Freak seemed to take the position of the monitoring agent that is always watching and staying vigilant: “The Freak, it seemed, did not drink; and hardly ate. She sat with the elbows of her bare brown arms on the table … staring across at the Mouse with her dark eyes” (40). Evidently, unlike David’s irreconcilable relationship between id and super-ego, Breasley’s is a happier situation.

The id and super-ego in Breasley achieve a certain degree of congeniality: “In spite of their seemingly disparate looks and intelligences there was evidently a closeness between them, a rapport that did not need words” (40). Freud explains that the super-ego “holds a special position between the Ego and the Id. It belongs to the Ego, shares its high psychological organization, but stands in an especially intimate connection with the Id” (Fodor and Gaynor 149). This relationship is significant for a healthy psychical life. It is just as important for the ego to live in concord with the super-ego as with the id. The bond between Anne (super-ego) and Breasley (ego) in relation to Diana (id) is well established. Anne explains the way Diana is different but a necessary link among the three: “In a funny sort of way Di’s the odd one out. Old Henry and me, we kind of live from day to day. Know what I mean. We couldn’t be innocent if we tried. Di’s the other way round” (73). Diana, as Anne asserts, is “the odd one out” because she is seen to be the locus of artistic energy that resists normalization or the act of living “from day to day” (73). Always in demand of dreams and innovations, Breasley leads a vigorous life with no sense of guilt because he has reached a point of contentment with both his id and super-ego figuratively residing in one location and signifying stasis. His super-ego, Anne, does not torment him the way Beth does with David. Because David’s ego is still in disharmony, it is still caught up between rebellion and domesticity. The way the super-ego influences each artist, as a controlling

entity that monitors the id drives, either helps or hinders the creative energy which makes the artist more aesthetically productive.

In David's psychical apparatus, the super-ego is paramount as represented by his wife whereas in Breasley's world the super-ego is simply the way he likes to perceive reality: "David remorsefully sees his material fidelity as weakness, Breasley's loose behaviour as creative courage: 'He sinned out of need and instinct; David did not, out of fear' (108). Breasley, therefore, seems to be in harmony and in possession of the id drives as represented by Diana's presence in his life, which renders the condition of living side by side with Anne quite psychoanalytically signifying. Anne becomes an imperative equalizer because the super-ego shares a common equalizing quality with the id: "In spite of their fundamental difference, the id and the super-ego have one thing in common; they both represent the influences of the past (the id the influence of heredity, the super-ego essentially the influence of what is taken over from other people)" (Fodor and Gaynor 150). The relationship between the ego and super-ego, therefore, becomes more explicit when Anne acknowledges the way Breasley looks at her: "Like the way he talks. He keeps telling me I behave like a flapper" (70). A flapper is actually a young woman who shows disdain for conventional dress and behaviour. In this sense, she is named to reflect what Breasley does by rejecting Abstraction, a school of art which was commonly accepted as the fashion of day. David does not reject duty or responsibility, "he is insisting that the duty and responsibility of the artist are to his work, and that the artist's life is an integral part of his work." (Loveday 93). He understands art and life "as distinct and separate. He cannot understand why Breasley is always speaking about women and sex in connection with painting or why he thinks of abstract painting in terms of castration and destruction" (Onega Jaen 462). Breasley's conception of art is the way he views the external world: "Because David is himself a highly derivative painter, influenced by many sources and formal training, he has trouble understanding Breasley's almost instinctive approach to art" (McDaniel 74). In effect, Breasley understands reality to be quite instinctive and therefore, succeeds in assimilating his super-ego into his imagined world and the Freak is the materialization of this assimilation. In effect, not only does a Freudian reading provide an insight into how these two artists are situated in their worlds but also how their psyches inform the schools of art they embrace and their understanding of life as a continuing journey of decision-making.

The notion of a journey or a quest that defines the novella's structure is not quite foreign to academic scholarship about this novella. In "John Fowles' *The Ebony Tower: Unity and Celtic Myth*," Raymond J. Wilson explains how "Fowles uses the myth of the quest for rebirth" as a recurrent theme that binds together the short stories in *The Ebony Tower* collection (305). Moreover, the suggestive nature of the quest yields a numberless variety of interpretation: "Although at the level of the fabula the purpose of the journey appears in principle to be a straightforward one – the interviewing of an elderly world-

famous painter by a young painter and art critic – the atmosphere in which the journey and actual meeting take place is much more suggestive and complex, constantly generating intertextual and archtextual perceptions with concrete romances and with the genre as such” (Onega Jaen 451). To Fowles, the artist is on a quest to reach out to the id which generates anxiety and moulds his or her own reality: “Fowles’ reality is the quest itself – man’s search for balance somewhere amid nature’s extremes, through her vast forests, which conceal both dangers and delights” (Huffaker 118). The dangers and delights refer, in Freudian terms, to respectively the super-ego and id, or by extension society and taboos as allegorically represented by Beth and Diana. Breasley, however, is not torn between two these conflicting drives. He is “entirely self-centered, fiercely opinionated, ‘profoundly amoral.’ He is called the ‘great man,’ but also the ‘old devil,’ the ‘wicked old faun, the ‘frightful old bastard.’ He is a modern-day pagan” (Olshen 95). He is naturally drawn to Diana as he has been always following his own fantasies with his peculiar single-mindedness regardless of any social proprieties or niceties.

The quest of rediscovery that Diana symbolically offers David, which is ultimately thwarted, has been a driving force and the name of the game of life for Breasley. The inviting nature of the journey is unequivocal as it provides David with a “sense of discovery [and] a pleasant illusion of bachelor freedom” (9). David, however, falls short of his quest because he veers off from the vast terrain of the id (the creative source of artistic energy) into the narrow path of social acceptability as monitored by the superego and represented by Beth: “David seeks acceptance rather than honor, (he) is driven by approval rather than passion. The medieval quester embodied the aspirations of his society; the Fowlesian post-modern quester embodies the shortcomings of his” (Foster 96). His experience with Diana, for better or worse, creates a moral dilemma. Choosing not to follow “a chance of a new existence,” David “felt a delayed but bitter envy of the old man” (112). Significantly enough, falling in love with Diana is identified in the text to be a representational encounter with the force of the id: “He was obsessed with means, not ends; with what people thought of him, not what he thought of himself. His terror of vanity, selfishness, the Id, which he had to conceal under qualities he called ‘honesty’ and ‘fairmindedness’” (107). Missing the opportunity to live a dream with Diana, who feeds the Freudian conceptualization of the id as a force that triggers impulse and obsession, David feels “crippled by common sense” (111) that is by his super-ego as implicitly represented by Beth. Having sacrificed a “chance and its exploitation … the flame of deep fire that had singed him a dream,” (112) he succumbs to domesticity and normative life. Ultimately, the success of the family man’s quest to suppress his id is the failure of the artist’s to override his super-ego.

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