

CREATING A POSTMODERN MYTH:
THE USE AND FUNCTION OF CLASSICAL ALLUSION AND MYTH
IN SELECTED NOVELS OF JOHN FOWLES

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Dissertation submitted in the Department of English of the
Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys in
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Magister Artium.

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POTCHEFSTROOM

1994

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study is the result of an interest both in the novels of John Fowles and in classical mythology.

I wish to thank the following institutions and people who in different ways enabled me to complete the study:

- * The HSRC for financial assistance.
- * The staff of the libraries at the following universities for their assistance: PU for CHE, UP and UNISA.
- * My supervisor - Mr A. M. de Lange - many thanks for his valuable advice, encouragement and interest in my development as a scholar. It was a privilege having him as a supervisor.
- * Prof J. Swanepoel, co-supervisor, for making constructive contributions towards stimulating my interest and giving advice with regard to the classical-mythological side of the study. I appreciate his contribution to this study.
- * The concern of my family and friends during the course of the study is very much appreciated.
- * A special word of thanks to my parents, who supported me during the whole of my academic career, and encouraged me to attempt the study.
- * The loving help and support of my husband meant more to me than I can really say.
- * May the glory be to God for enabling me to complete the study.

Truida-Marthe Blignaut

The views and opinions expressed in this study are those of the writer and do not reflect those of the HSRC or any other institution.

SUMMARY

The use of classical allusion and myth in postmodern literature initially seems to create a paradox, especially when keeping in mind some of the characteristics of postmodern literature, such as contemporariness, innovation, a questioning attitude and self-reflexion. Nevertheless, John Fowles uses classical allusions in most of his postmodernist writings.

In order to determine the extent of the use of classical allusions and the end to which this use leads, as well as its function in postmodern literature, an attempt is made to provide a theoretical framework to deal with classical allusion and myth, and the interpretative problems the reader has to face when confronted by an allusion. The theoretical concepts discussed are applied in the analysis of three of Fowles's novels, namely The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), The Magus (1977) and Mantissa (1982). These novels are treated separately. The aim is to ascertain whether the use of classical allusion and myth in postmodern literature leads to the creation of a myth with postmodern characteristics.

An overview of the use of classical allusions in the rest of the Fowles oeuvre is also given, in order to establish the development in his use of classical allusion. An assessment of the reader's involvement in dealing with classical allusions in postmodern literature is provided as well.

The conclusion indicates whether or not Fowles creates a so-called postmodern myth, and to which extent the reader contributes to the process. The question whether classical allusion and myth still have something to say for postmodern man is also addressed, in an attempt to ascertain the place of the former in postmodern literature.

OPSOMMING

Die gebruik van klassieke verwysings en mites in postmoderne literatuur lyk aanvanklik paradoksaal, veral as sommige van die kenmerke van postmoderne literatuur in gedagte gehou word, bv. tydgenootlikheid, innovering, 'n ondersoekende benadering en ook selfondersoek. Nogtans gebruik John Fowles klassieke verwysings in die meeste van sy postmodernistiese geskrifte.

Om die omvang, uiteindelijke doelwit en funksie van hierdie gebruik in postmoderne literatuur te bepaal, word gepoog om 'n teoretiese raamwerk vir klassieke verwysing en mite asook die leser se hantering van 'n verwysing te gee. Die teoretiese begrippe wat bespreek is, word toegepas in die analise van drie van Fowles se romans, nl. The French Lieutenant's Woman (1969), The Magus (1977) en Mantissa (1982). Hierdie romans word afsonderlik behandel. Die doel is om te bepaal of die gebruik van klassieke verwysings en mite in postmoderne literatuur lei tot die skepping van 'n mite met postmoderne kenmerke.

'n Oorsig oor die gebruik van klassieke verwysings in die res van Fowles se oeuvre word ook gegee om die ontwikkeling in sy gebruik van klassieke verwysings te bepaal. Die betrokkenheid van die leser in die hantering van klassieke verwysings in postmoderne literatuur word ook beoordeel.

In die gevolgtrekking word aangedui of Fowles wel 'n sogenaamde postmoderne mite skep en tot watter mate die leser daartoe bydra. Die vraag of klassieke verwysings en mite nog relevant is vir die postmoderne mens word ook aangespreek om die plek daarvan in postmoderne literatuur te bepaal.

CONTENTS

	Summary	i
	Opsomming	ii
1	Introduction	1
2	Classical Allusion and Myth: Working Definitions	6
3	<u>The French Lieutenant's Woman</u> : A Choice of Gods	31
4	<u>The Magus</u> : The Godgame	53
5	<u>Mantissa</u> : A Parody of Myth	79
6	Classical Allusions in the Other Texts	101
7	Reader-Text Interaction: Myth-Making	110
8	Conclusion: Development and Postmodern Myth	126
9	Bibliography	131