JOHN FOWLES' NATURE WRITING AND ENGLISH ROMANTICISM

JOHN FOWLES'UN DOĞA YAZIMI VE İNGİLİZ ROMANTİZMİ

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Abstract

This study explores the essence of the relationship between the interpretations of nature in the theoretical discussions of English Romanticism and twentieth-century British novelist John Robert Fowles' nature writing. It is pointed out that the emergence of the Romantic movement in English Literature at the end of the eighteenth century marked a profound development in terms of the definitions of nature in the contemporary literary theory. Romanticism principally introduced to English-language literary studies a new conception of the term nature. Beginning in the Renaissance England with Sir Philip Sidney's interpretations of the classical Aristotelian definition of poetry, nature as a special term had thoroughly characterised the connection between the poet and poetry. Nature in this connection specified the contemporary reality, more particularly the truth. This classical conception of nature had monopolised literary studies in England during the two following centuries especially through the theoretical arguments of John Dryden, Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson. It was for the first time with Romanticism that nature meant the earth with all the characteristic features and forces of the planet. What the Romantic theory of literature further accentuated was the priority of the poet's subjectivity over the uniqueness of the canonical critical doctrine. This study thus argues that Fowles' nature writing is particularly a Romantic approach to the notion of nature having at the same time an intention of drawing attention to human abuse of nature. Fowles' nature writing is also to be read as a personal protest against the common lack of interest in the issue.

Öz

Bu çalışma, İngiliz Romantizmi ile yirminci yüzyıl İngiliz roman yazarı John Robert Fowles'un doğa yazımının kuramsal tartışmalarında yer alan doğa yorumlamaları arasındaki ilişkinin yapısını incelemektedir. Romantik akımın İngiliz Edebiyatı'nda on sekizinci yüzyıl sonunda ortaya çıkışının, dönemin edebiyat kuramında doğa kavramının tanımlamaları açısından büyük bir gelişmeye işaret ettiği bu doğrultuda belirtilmektedir. Romantizm esas anlamda, o dönemde İngiltere'de sürdürülmekte olan edebiyat çalışmalarına doğa kavramının yeni bir algısını tanıtmıştır. Doğa kavramı Rönesans İngilteresi'nde Sir Philip Sidney'in klasik Aristocu edebiyat tanımının yorumları ile başlayarak, yazar ve eser arasındaki bağı tümüyle nitelendirmiştir. Bu bağ çerçevesinde doğa çağdaş gerçekliği, daha belirgin bir ifade ile gerçeği belirtmiştir. Bu türde klasik bir doğa kavramı, takip eden iki yüzyıl boyunca özellikle de John Dryden, Alexander Pope ve Samuel Johnson'ın tartışmaları ile İngiltere'de edebiyat çalışmalarını tekelinde tutmuştur. İlk olarak Romantizm akımıyla doğa kavramı gezegenin bütün belirleyici özellikleri ile yeryüzünü ifade etmeye başlayan bir kavram haline gelmiştir. Romantik kuram ayrıca, şairin öznelliğinin geleneksel eleştiri öğretisi karşısındaki önceliğini de vurgulamıştır. Bu çalışma bu nedenle, Fowles'un doğa yazımının aynı zamanda insanın doğayı suistimaline dikkat çekmeyi de amaçlayan Romantik bir yaklaşım olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Fowles'un doğa yazımı aynı zamanda bu soruna olan genel kayıtsızlığa karşı bir itiraz olarak da okunmalıdır.

1.Introduction

The central argument of John Robert Fowles' (1926-2005) nature writing is remarkably redolent of the analytical interpretations of nature especially in first-generation Romantics' (William Blake [1757-1827], William Wordsworth [1770-1850] and Samuel Taylor Coleridge [1772-1834]) theory of literature which essentially deviates from the long-established classical recognition of the term. The theoretical discussions of first-generation Romantics in English Literature bring in an unconventional awareness of nature in an attempt to diverge from the earlier

classical practice and understanding. It is due to this fact that a concise outline of this prior perception – the conventional illustrations of the conceptualisation of nature in English-language literary theory – could possibly help better recognise the subject. It is plainly discernible in retrospect that until the emergence of the Romantic movement in English Literature towards the end of the eighteenth century, the traditional classical discussion about the connotations of nature had remained essentially unchanged. When the most authoritative contemporary texts of literary criticism are considered today, it is seen that particularly beginning with Sir Philip Sidney's (1554-1586) theoretical analyses of nature in the classical Aristotelian tradition of literary formation, any formulation of the relationship between the artist and the artistic product had largely been interpreted on the principle that the artist heavily depended on nature – the phenomenal world in terms of the contemporary truth and reality for the poetic creativity. Mostly parallel to the teachings of the ancient Greek doctrine, Sidney, for example, significantly records in his theoretical writings that "*[p]oesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word mimesis, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture; with this end, to teach and delight*" (9). As it is notably illustrated in these words, poetry is a metaphorical drawing of what nature connotes which symbolically delivers the poet's messages to the reader. In addition to this – and this is probably more crucial than the previous argument to comprehend the picture here – through such a classical interpretation of poetry as a form of art, Sidney categorically established a tradition of the notion of nature which would in English-language literary criticism continue to be the guiding argument until the end of the eighteenth century. In other words, it would be until the end of the century the idea of the canonical Aristotelian illustration of nature as the interaction between the poet and poetry. Over and above all these, Sidney's definition of nature is so classically Aristotelian that it is, in his discussions, almost no more than the repetition of the key concepts specially articulated by the ancient Greek philosopher. It is thus underscored elsewhere that "*[t]hough they discuss the concept somewhat differently, both Aristotle and Sidney seem to agree in essential matters*" (Kishler 64). For example, it is a thoroughly revealing glimpse of the contemporary intellectual scene that Sidney concentrates on the two well-known Aristotelian notions of poetic composition, knowledge and pleasure, as the principal ambitions of the poet miming nature asserting that the artist imitates in order "*to teach and delight*" (9).

II. The Pre-Romantic Cycle

Following Sidney who characteristically defined the outline of the classical theoretical discussions about nature and literature in the English Renaissance, John Dryden (1631-1700) as the leading literary critic of the seventeenth-century England represented the same intellectual perspective of the tradition of the Aristotelian notion of nature. Since Aristotle made most of his major analytical points of the argument particularly in his theory of tragedy (i.e. dramatic art as the imitation of nature), Dryden as well articulates his assumptions about nature in the state of contemporary English literature through his dramatic theory. What Dryden particularly does in this discussion, however, is only a comparison between the ancient Greek and Roman and the contemporary English playwrights where he is deeply disappointed – in terms of nature – to conclude that "*[t]hose Ancients have been faithful imitators and wise observers of that nature which is so torn and ill represented in our plays*" (19). In addition to this, although it is argued that Dryden "*reinterprets the classical rules so that he finds a place for most of the new perfections within the framework of these Aristotelian-Horatian rules*" (Thale 38), it is observable not only in his words but also in his tone here that the same Aristotelian concern about the true character of literature in association with nature, represented earlier by Sidney in England, remains to be the principal interest of the critic. Dryden's references, unquestionably similar to those of both Aristotle and Sidney, are to the notion of the meticulous imitation of nature – of the truth (the contemporary reality) as the underlying principle of all representative arts. Furthermore, Dryden's discussion about the indisputable superiority of the ancient dramatists to the contemporary names continues focusing more on the relationship between nature and art. Particularly specifying the role of nature, Dryden says, "*they have handed down to us a perfect resemblance of her; which we, like ill copiers, neglecting to look on, have rendered monstrous, and disfigured*" (20). This is the Aristotelian theory of art which interprets the relationship between nature and art as the product of imitation. Dryden's adherence to the classical theory of art even goes deeper when he proposes that the contemporary English playwrights (tragedians) should stick to the Aristotelian standard of the three unities. Aristotle's Poetics, together with Horace's *Art of Poetry*, Dryden comments, are the two highly significant sources; and "*[o]ut of these two have been extracted the famous rules which the French call,* Des Trois Unités*, or, the three unities, which ought to be observed in every regular play; namely, of time, place, and action*" (20). In addition to this, Dryden attaches so critical a role to the three unities that the contemporary

English playwright who refrained from observing the rule of nature would destroy the unity of the play. As a result of this, Dryden concludes that "*[i]f by these rules [...] we should judge our modern plays, 'tis probable, that few of them would endure the trial*" (24).

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) was the most illustrative of all the names of the classical Aristotelian tradition in the early eighteenth-century literary criticism in England. It was so much so that "*Pope could agree with Horace on the basic truth of this tenet, and advise that Aristotle had much to teach the writer, and point to Homer and Virgil as psychologists of human behavior*" (Tobin 347). Nature (the truth), as perhaps the most substantial concept of the classical theory of art, is one of the key terms of Pope's argument in his theoretical writings. He says, for example, that the contemporary literary critic should "*[f]irst follow Nature*" (16) so that he, as the one who does judge, is to know how to evaluate and decide. According to Pope, as it was for Aristotle as well, nature never changes, and therefore, it is "*[u]nerring Nature, still divinely bright [...] At once the source, and end, and test of art*" (17). Additionally, nature occupies, for Pope, as it did for the classical theorists, so indispensible a position that whatever the contemporary literary critic needs, Pope argues, is to be found in nature. "*Those rules of old discovered, not devised*" (18), Pope says, "*[a]re Nature still, but Nature methodized*" (18). Pope's criticism effectively reminds his readers of Dryden's arguments where the latter was blaming the contemporary English playwrights for their subtle lack of the merit of and virtue in comprehending nature that the classical writers had enjoyed. It is because of this obstacle that Pope calls his contemporaries as "*[t]hose half-learn'd witlings*" (12). As a result of this, Pope's disapproval of the contemporary critic's lack of knowledge of particular subjects is highly allusive of the criticism of both Aristotle and Sidney where there is a special attention to the significance of knowledge of nature. Furthermore, it was especially Sidney who intrinsically emphasised the role of awareness and intelligence in the Renaissance England. The keyword of his discussion was knowledge: "*[f]or some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by knowledge and no knowledge to be so high and heavenly as acquaintance with the stars*" (12). In addition to this, Dryden, very much like how Sidney underscored teaching and delight in nature as the outcome of the poetic composition in his definition of poetry, employs the same terms in his advice to the literary critic. He asserts, "*[b]e Homer's works your study and delight*" (24); and he concludes saying, "*[r]ead them by day, and meditate by night*" (24).

It is even in Samuel Johnson's (1709-1784) limited criticism in scope, his criticism of Shakespeare as an English dramatist, that the influence of the classical literary tradition of the interpretation of nature is palpable. For example, as it is properly stated here, "*[i]n the case of* Ars Poetica*, his great model is Aristotle's Poetics*" (Lee 144). Among the most remarkable names of the late eighteenth-century conventional literary criticism in England, Johnson displays in his critical writings a general equivalence to the illustrations of nature in previous texts. In other words, one of the most notable examples of this correspondence between Johnson's and the previous discussions about literary criticism is his frequent exercise of nature as a term in his critical writings. Nature for Johnson, as it was for Sidney, Dryden and Pope, is one of the most meaningful concepts of traditional literary theory. Shakespeare, for example, "*is above all writers, at least above all modern writers*" (11) for Johnson. This is particularly because of the fact that Shakespeare, Johnson claims, is "*the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life*" (11). Johnson, therefore, associates nature with man, with life itself for he traces Shakespeare's magnitude as a name to his outstanding portrayal of his characters, more particularly, of man in life. Besides this, nature for Johnson is the term that the writer, or the dramatist, must be keeping a watchful eye on. He accordingly remarks that "*[n]othing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature*" (11). Nature is "*real life*" (12) where "*so much instruction is derived*" (11). While Aristotle defined the essence of drama as man in action, Johnson's interpretation concentrates in an identical intonation more on the vices and virtues of man as a social being. Johnson adds more illustrations to the Aristotelian definition. He says,

> [o]ut of this chaos of mingled purposes and casualties the ancient poets, according to the laws which custom had prescribed, selected some the crimes of men, and some their absurdities; some the momentous vicissitudes of life, and some the lighter occurrences; some the terrors of distress, and some the gayeties of prosperity. (16)

As a result of this, the Aristotelian definitions of the two leading dramatic types, the tragedy and the comedy, as the imitations of nature – of noble and base actions in particular – evolve into the Johnsonian interpretation as "*[t]hus rose the two modes of imitation, known by the names of tragedy and comedy, compositions intended to promote different ends by contrary means, and considered as so little allied*" (16).

The classical conventional theory of literature in England had mostly relied, until the end of the eighteenth century, on the canonical Aristotelian illustrations of nature. Beginning from Sidney's publication of *An Apology for Poetry* in 1595 in the Renaissance England, English-language literary criticism carefully pursued the footsteps of the classical Greek representation. In Sidney's criticism, it is – and this is quite understandable because of the spirit of the Renaissance in England – mostly a restatement of the essence of nature emphasised by Aristotle in his literary theories. Most of Sidney's nature references are to Aristotle's *Poetics*. This particular situation repeats itself through the discussions of later literary critics. Dryden's theory of drama articulated in his *An Essay of Dramatic Poesy* in 1668 is the result of the critic's comparison specially made between the ancient Greek and Roman and the contemporary English playwrights. The reason for Dryden's disappointment is his personal but deep conviction that it is inconceivable to compare the contemporary playwright with the ancient for he failed to imitate nature as the antique names had done. Pope and Johnson participate in the same critical tradition. Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* is an advice published in 1711 on how a literary critic could examine and evaluate different literary texts. Pope's specific criterion in selecting is nature as well. Moreover, Johnson's criticism of Shakespeare as an English dramatist in his 1765 essay *Preface to Shakespeare* reformulates the Aristotelian definitions of the tragedy and the comedy as imitations of nature in terms of two popular dramatic forms.

III. The Romantic Era

In stark contrast to this traditional critical perspective on the notion of nature, the growth of the Romantic movement in English literature at the end of the eighteenth century effectively introduced an unfamiliar viewpoint of the term to literary studies. This was a consequence of the fact that first-generation English Romantic theorists particularly chose to concentrate on a personal and therefore a subjective approach (i.e. the subjective experience of the poet) not only to the interpretations of nature, which had as a concept systematically been objectified through the scientific rationalisation of the Enlightenment, but also to the definitions of the poet and poetry. This unusual situation was at the same time, as it is stated here in this comment, "*[t]he romantic emphasis on the uniqueness and wholeness of the individual self*" (Onega 33). Nature was, for the Romantic poet and the theorist, the only source of inspiration as well as the origin of the poet's contentment and delight. The Romantic poet perceived nature to be the principle of

his art and imagination for he believed that he was as a human being essentially connected to nature. It was particularly William Wordsworth's publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 that officially marked – including the above-mentioned change – the beginning of the new era in English Literature. However, it was more precisely the poet's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* published in 1800 where the tenets of English Romanticism and the Romantic notion of poetry as an art were illustrated in detail to the reader. What the Preface notably tells of is the fundamental remodelling of the understanding of poetry itself. According to Wordsworth, writing – or composing – poetry is no more a methodically prescribed project whose guidelines and specifications have already been illustrated and outlined by classical theoretical arguments. It was, as canonised by Aristotle, principally the imitation of nature that the artist (the poet, the writer) accomplished; and this principle had dominated, throughout the three centuries, the theoretical discussions in English Literature. For the first time with the birth of Romanticism in English Literature and English-language literary studies, the classical tradition of the context of nature in literary criticism has been interrupted. Poetry, for Wordsworth and for the English Romantic poets of his generation, is principally a personal and thus a subjective endeavour. In addition to this, the Romantic poet is believed to personally experience nature in order to accomplish what is aesthetically beautiful and enjoyable, the sublime in particular. It is the result of this that Wordsworth's "*poetry maintains the priority of the poem's production over its understanding or reception*" (Chase and Warminski 2). According to the Romantic theory of literature, Wordsworth says, the poet (the writer) should never be in a fully organized, thoroughly designed project as it exactly was for the classical theorists. Poetry, on the contrary, is

> an experiment, which [...] might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men, in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart. (Wordsworth 1)

As it is evidently witnessed in these words, for the first time in literary theory in English Literature there has been a reference to the essence of the language used by the poet. Romantic theory of literature underscores the subjectivity of the poet so definitely that the language, which was once restricted and restrained, becomes common language (natural language) spoken by the common man. Furthermore, Romantic theory simplifies the implications of literature as a form of art. It makes

the substance of literature less complicated, and thus easier to comprehend. It is because of this, Wordsworth speaking both as the poet and as the critic says that

> [t]he principal object [...] which I proposed to myself in these poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life and to relate or describe them [...] as far as possible, in a selection of language really used by men. (2)

Literary activity (artistic creativity) as Wordsworth suggest relies no more on the classical Aristotelian formulation of literary theory. It is a private and an individual practice particularly built on simple and familiar motifs.

However, Wordsworth never implies a lack of artistry of or proficiency in the individual works of Romantic literature. Although his illustrations might sound to give the impression that the Romantic poet could perhaps compose more easily than, for example, the neoclassical writer did, the theory categorically hands over the greatest responsibility to nobody but the poet. It is thus the Romantic poet who colours what is ordinary. Wordsworth accordingly writes, "*and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual way*" (2-3). The themes chosen by the Romantic poet are uncomplicated; but there is, at the same time, an intelligible argument for the reader. As Wordsworth states here, "*[h]umble and rustic life was generally chosen, because in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language*" (3). The focus of the poet is on the choice of a language through which an emphatic relationship with the reader could be secured. The argument is simple but honest so that the poet could talk to the emotions of the reader. As a result of this, "*such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language*" (Wordsworth 3). The philosophical language of the poet combined with his creativity has brought about the illustrious description of poetry formed by Wordsworth according to whom, "*all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings*" (4). This plain but at the same time elaborate statement of the nature of poetry specifically illustrates the character of Romantic literature which accentuates the significance of individual experience. It is because of this particular perspective on poetry that Wordsworth further expresses his own ideas about questions such as what it is to be meant by the poet, what a poet is, whom he

addresses himself to and what language it is to be expected from him. Wordsworth's answer to all of these questions is that "*[h]e is a man speaking to men*" (8).

Samuel Taylor Coleridge contributed to *Lyrical Ballads* as well; yet he concentrated in his theoretical writings more on the essence of the relationship between human mind and imagination both instructed and supervised by nature. Mostly stimulated by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) critique of the mind, Coleridge analyses imagination through two special terms: the primary imagination and the secondary imagination. The primary imagination as Coleridge argues is the power to perceive whereas the secondary imagination is the power to create. It is because of this difference that the secondary imagination compared to the primary imagination is especially more dynamic and forceful for "*[i]t dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate*" (Coleridge lxvii). What the secondary imagination signifies is the poet's creative faculty, his "*colours of imagination*" (Coleridge 5). His poetry as it is suggested even "*explores the magical power of the imagination*" (Taylor 78) for it is the Romantic poet who through imagination and in a relationship with nature is to transcend the barriers of ordinary life. In other words, nature forges and fashions the Romantic poet's imagination. Coleridge's Romantic theory of poetry demonstrates itself in his description particularly through his accentuations of the significance of art and pleasure. Coleridge defines poetry saying,

> [a] poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species – (having this object in common with it) – it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part. (10)

As a member of second-generation English Romantic poets and critics who published their critical texts later than Wordsworth and Coleridge did, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) principally relates the art of poetry in his romantic theory of literature to the poet's subjective imagination as well. In other words, Shelley "*develops a sophisticated theory of poetry's primary appeal to the imagination*" (O'Neill 20). Moreover, it is the consequence of this approach that Shelly says, "*[p]oetry, in a general sense, may be defined to be 'the expression of the Imagination'*" (12). Although it is the poet's imagination that generates the scheme for and the aesthetics of the artistic process, Shelley too uncovers the truth through

imagination. According to him, therefore, "*[a] poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth*" (27). In addition to this perspective, Shelley's definition of poetry fully establishes the Romantic notion of personality. It is the poet's subjectivity which precisely defines the character of his art. Therefore, Shelley illustrates that "*[p]oetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds*" (79).

IV. Fowles' Nature Writing

The interpretation and the illustration of nature in English Romanticism conclusively differ from the patterns of those of the classical literary theorists. Nature as a term is one of the most regularly recapitulated notions of the classical theoretical discussion that has been held in literary studies. As it has been pointed out on the earlier pages, nature in the classical Aristotelian theory is the only authority over any artistic doctrine. Nature is the contemporary reality that the artist has to observe carefully in order to be able to represent the truth in art. Furthermore, nature is the truth itself that the classical literary theory fully designates to be the only guide to the greatest accomplishment. Both Dryden and Pope specially emphasise such an interpretation of nature in their theoretical arguments. Nature not as the product of the Enlightenment objectification but as itself and as an environmental issue, however, has truly become a literary consideration through the Romantic theory of literature. Instead of promising to be the never-misleading guide for the poet, nature suggests for the Romantic poet and the theorist all the essential and the characteristic features of the world, all the animals and plants; nature is the weather and the sea. As opposed to the previous understanding of nature in literary theory and practice, the Romantic poet (the Romantic writer) personally celebrates nature and glorifies his relationship as a human being and as an artist with nature. In addition to this, the Romantic poet widely criticises the contemporary hostility (i.e. the social and the economic change of industrialisation) to the already fragile ecology of the world.

It thoroughly makes sense as it is expressed here in this assertion that "*Fowles aligns himself with the Romantics: as Jonathan Bate comments, 'in Romantic poetics, poetry is to be found not only in language but in nature'*" (Wilson 145). Related to this specific observation, Fowles' nature writing can be acknowledged as a continuation of particularly first-generation Romantics' involvement in nature as itself. In other words, Fowles' environmentally concerned narratives (both fiction and non-fiction) – though surprisingly limited in number due perhaps to the fact that Fowles

"*suppose[s] that even the act of writing in a sense destroys what you feel about [nature]*" (Foulke 378) – can be read and analysed especially within the interests of the above mentioned Romantic tradition of the poet's commitment to nature in English Literature. Some of Fowles' non-fictional writings are so green in terms of the great emphasis laid on the fundamental principles of English Romanticism such as nature, emotion, imagination and subjectivity that they frequently echo the theoretical discussions of the earlier Romantic theorists, Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular. According to Fowles, for example, "*how deeply [islands] can haunt [...] imagination*" (337), which may perhaps connote the idea that "*[i]slandness also means that you live a life closer to nature*" (Conkling 199). In addition to this, Fowles accentuates the Romantic idea of being part of nature asserting "*what is lovely about nature is the present act of observing it and feeling oneself in it*" (Foulke 378). Besides his collection of essays on nature and the environment that he wrote during the two decades between '70s and '90s and that he published in 1998 under the title *Wormholes: Essays and Occasional Writings*, Fowles' 1979 book *The Tree*, which is claimed to have "*gone virtually unnoticed by the literary and scholarly community*" (Dopp and Olshen 31), and which is further said to be "*of considerable interest for a variety of reasons, including the light it sheds on Fowles's sense of himself, the connections it invites with his other works, and the questions it poses about autobiography conceived as self-expression and self-discovery*" (Dopp and Olshen 31), exactly manifests most of the writer's fundamental approaches to and concerns about nature. Easily comparable to the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth-century Romantic perception of nature in English Literature, moreover, Fowles' writing especially in this book mirrors the same individual awareness of the human use and misuse, namely the human exploitation of nature.

Mostly echoing the criticism of Wordsworth, Fowles argues in *The Tree* that scientific revolution and industrial development, for example, have granted man the authority to detach both animate and inanimate objects from where they naturally belong to, their nature. According to Fowles, furthermore, this situation is because of the fact that man is an "*isolating creature*" (26), who unfortunately "*betrays [his] love of clearly defined boundaries, unique identities, of the individual thing released from the confusion of the background*" (26). Fowles mirrors the Romantic criticism of the Industrial Revolution; and he states the idea that the development of science and the inventions of the new set of tools by man have furnished him with the "*power of detaching an object from its surroundings and making us concentrate on it*" (26). Moreover, Fowles' special interest in the notion of detachment in nature in his

discussion is remarkably reminiscent of another remarkable name, the American transcendentalist philosopher, poet and literary critic Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) idea of ugliness where the point is again on the Romantic concern for the human abuse of nature. Emerson believes that the transcendentalist/Romantic poet rehabilitates nature and thus rebuilds the beauty (of nature). Emerson declares that

> [f]or as it is dislocation and detachment from the life of God that makes things ugly, the poet, who re-attaches things to nature and the Whole, - reattaching even artificial things and violations of nature, to nature, by a deeper insight, - disposes very easily of the most disagreeable facts. (18)

Fowles' nature writing is essentially an allusion to the Romantic heritage of the poet's subjectivity which has thoroughly replaced the classical tradition of the role of the poet in English Literature. Instead of being a part of the Renaissance and the neoclassical writing in English language, Fowles, very much like what early English Romantic poets did, prefers to articulate a subjective narrative of nature in his related writings mostly originating in his own artistic and intellectual background. His nature-oriented narratives, therefore, are modestly enunciated perceptions of the contemporary environmental reality. It is in such a humble tone that Fowles openly discloses his subjective approach to nature. In other words, it is his personal sympathy and passion for nature when Fowles asserts that "*the key to my fiction, for what it is worth, lies in my relationship with nature*" (31). Relevant to this subjective statement, it should further be noted that his 1965 novel *The Magus*, an example for "*Fowles's obsession with the secret green place*" (Birdsall 94), describes how nature and natural beauty (the Mediterranean beauty of Greece in relation to the Lake District of England in Romantic context) heal and repair the (English) protagonist's damaged and broken identity which has been detached from its nature. Furthermore, the illustration of nature in art, for Fowles, is indeed so challenging that although he attempted – like the Romantic poets did – to accomplish this task, he still assumes that it is "*an experience whose deepest value lies in the fact that it cannot be directly described by any art [...] including that of words*" (32).

What Fowles revolts against as an environmentally conscious writer in *The Tree* is the human rationalisation of nature that as a concept truly materialised in England in the Victorian period as a result of the Industrial Revolution. According

to Fowles, "*[a]ll this is an unhappy legacy from Victorian science, which was so characteristically obsessed with both the machine and exact taxonomy*" (30), where he adds more saying, "*[b]ut I think the most harmful change brought about by Victorian science is our attitude to nature*" (33). This is the artist's Romantic sympathy for nature. It should be remembered that the adverse consequences of the Industrial Revolution especially for the land and for pasture were among the greatest concerns of both Wordsworth and Coleridge. Fowles believes that nature had been objectified for it was largely the human interest in and relation to nature that changed so dramatically in the nineteenth-century England in the intellectual perspective that nature then merely became the source for the scientific knowledge which would chiefly serve the human development. Fowles criticises this mindset and calls that attitude a "*dreadfully serious and puritanical approach*" (33). According to Fowles, on the contrary, it is not only a scientific but also an aesthetic relationship that man must have with nature. However, any modern human relation to nature, Fowles says, has been stripped off all the meaning, "*which seems increasingly in a narcissistic way*" (39). Comparable to the suggestions of the Romantic philosophy, the modern man for Fowles is no longer a part of nature for he has deeply been alienated from the authentic implications of nature.

It is mostly in his nonfiction that Fowles' nature writing becomes more specifically focused on a particular environmental issue. For example, in his 1970 essay "Weeds, Bugs, Americans," Fowles' impatience with what he almost outrageously calls "*the contemporary rape of nature*" (290) dominates the tone of the narrative. Fowles criticises the common hypocrisy of the modern man who he believes has never been sincere to conserve nature. It is because of this that Fowles never trusts words. As he declares, he does not believe that labels have any meanings in themselves. Related to this, one of the most popular and most frequently repeated words of the modern world, conservation, is a meaningless label for Fowles. Although conservation is extremely important and necessary and it is highly crucial to the present environmental question, Fowles concludes that

> [n]o public figure today would dare state that he or she thinks humanity can support the continued cost of pollution and dying nature. Never mind what that public figure may do in private practice; he or she won't deny the most fashionable solicitude of our time. (289)

There is a general consensus in the world that man needs conservation, yet the public indifference to the issue, according to Fowles, has significantly been shadowing the real threat.

Fowles may be claimed to have a discouraged prospect for he does not foresee any future that would perhaps promise public awareness of and sensibility to the environment and nature, which is one of the most evident differences between the discussions of English Romantics and Fowles. It is the result of this situation that Fowles gives his reader a warning saying, "*[i]f we don't help, if the whole social climate isn't one of active participation, right down to the personal and household level, then all ordinary wildlife is doomed*" (290). According to Fowles, environmental protection should thus be a public service for which, instead of individuals, governments should be responsible. Fowles' involvement as an environmentally conscious writer in the protection of nature has left footprints in his fictional narratives. Besides *The Magus* which has already been referred above, his 1963 novel *The Collector* typifies a special category of people who abuse nature, the collector, whom Fowles describes saying, "*[o]ne can safely assume that anyone who still collects (i.e., kills) some field of living life just for pleasure and vanity has all the makings of a concentration-camp commandant*" (303). And this, according to Fowles, is because of his belief that "*[e]gg collecting, butterfly hunting, taxidermy, and all that infamous brood of narcissistic and parasitical hobbies have become so obviously evil*" (303).

Fowles' protest against the human abuse of nature is particularly noticeable in the special image of the collector. It is in Fowles' 1971 essay "The Blinded Eye" that the writer denounces man by calling him "*that vicious parasitical predator*" (309). This adverse illustration of man is the consequence of the idea that "*[f]irst of all, I was a collector. One of the reasons I wrote – and named – my novel* The Collector *was to express my hatred of this lethal perversion. All natural-history collectors in the end collect the same thing: the death of the living*" (Fowles 309-310). The protagonist of the novel Fowles refers to in the above quotation is a collector who collects butterflies; yet he extends his occupation to other animate beings, especially young girls. The collector collects in order to kill; he destroys other life and nature for the pleasure of killing. Although to some extent it might be acceptable that "*[t]he nature John Fowles shows us is not Wordsworth's nature. There is no 'ministry' here in which nature purposefully shapes human minds as in* The Prelude" (Andrews 155), Fowles' Romantic appeal to the reader to enhance the value of his relationship with

nature becomes even more meaningful when he draws a striking analogy between nature and art. Fowles associates art (his art) with nature; and his individual notion of nature proposes the idea that "*[n]ature is a sort of art sans art; and the right human attitude to it ought to be unashamedly poetic rather than scientific*" (312). Fowles reminds his reader of the historical background of the emergence of Romanticism in English Literature at the end of the nineteenth century. The background, for Fowles, was so similar to the present time that it was "*a highly cerebral and artificial period, and one that would have raped nature quite as abominably as ourselves if it had had the technology and population to hand*" (312-313). Furthermore, Fowles presumes that the principal intention of the Romantic theory of poetry was to formulate the policy to reconstruct the fragmented relationship between man and nature. In other words, what is highlighted in Fowles' narrative is "*the lack of communication – between human beings, as well as humanity and nature*" (Vieth 231).

V. Conclusion

The true character of the relationship between the interpretations of nature in English Romanticism and Fowles' nature writing is far beyond the limits of an article. However, the argument of Fowles' nature writing is so reminiscent of the theoretical background of English Romanticism that a more moderate analysis of the topic has always been possible. This study is the result of such an approach. Nature as a particular term is one of the most fundamental concepts of the classical literary theory. It is so fundamental that the Aristotelian formulation of this special term has introduced the traditional definition of the role of the poet as the artist. The role of the poet is to acknowledge nature as the only guide to the truth. Nature, according to the conventional Aristotelian interpretation, is the contemporary reality; it is the truth itself. This classical notion of nature as the only reliable guide to truth continued in the English-language literary criticism until the appearance of the Romantic movement at the end of the eighteenth century. Beginning with Sidney's repetition in his writings of the discussions of the Aristotelian literary theory, the use of nature as a term in literary criticism in England became a standard of any canonical works of literature. Sidney thoroughly agreed with the implications of the Aristotelian concepts of the theory of literature including nature. Dryden, Pope and even Johnson tracked the classical discussion introduced by Sidney to English Literature in the sixteenth-century Renaissance England. It is especially the criticism of Dryden and Pope which not only restated but also

extended the Aristotelian theory to their ages. However, it was the emergence of the Romantic theory which exactly reshaped the interpretation of nature in literary studies in England. It was through the discussions of Romanticism that Nature became a notion which the Romantic poet recognised that he was part of. Similar to the traditional perception, nature stood for the poet to be the source of poetry; but it grew into one of the Romantic poet's greatest involvements. The Romantic understanding of nature settled a meaning which Fowles' twentieth-century nature writing today adequately resounds. It is the Romantic notion of nature that the poet is part of and thus has sympathy for. Fowles acknowledges the Romantic perception of nature. Fowles' nature is once again in trouble; and his concern for nature is perceived in his subjective protest.

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