Above all, we learn from this interesting and informative collection of essays that the Toronto Conferences on Editorial Problems are valuable contributions to the world of letters. Their continuation must be a source of considerable satisfaction to Canadian scholars.

JOSEPH GOLD / University of Waterloo

Barry N. Olshen, John Fowles (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978). xii, 140. $8.95

It is not undercutting the welcome clarity and succinctness of Barry N. Olshen's study of John Fowles to say that these qualities may owe their existence in part to the limitations of size imposed by Ungar's Modern Literature Monograph Series. It is indeed a formidable task to discuss in 120 pages Fowles's four novels, his collection of short fiction, his book of philosophical speculations, his translations, his verse, his journalism, not to mention his work for film. Olshen wisely chooses to restrict himself to the fiction, since it is as a narrative writer that Fowles is deservedly best known. This decision is in no way one to limit the range of the study, of course, since Fowles's virtuosity in narrative form is both an obvious fact for the reader and a deliberate aim of the author.

Following the chronology of Fowles's life, the Introduction repeats the major biographical points of particular interest for the reader of Fowles's fiction. The dangers inherent in examining the life to discover the roots of themes of the work are obvious, but Olshen sidesteps them to some extent by allowing Fowles's own statements to make the connections; for example, between his theme of individualism and his early reaction against the suburban respectability of his home town of Leigh-on-Sea, or between the theme of power and the author's experiences at Bedford School and as a youthful game hunter and butterfly collector. Three other biographical facts allow Olshen to trace the more philosophical and literary influences on Fowles's work: his Oxford years studying French Language and Literature, his time in Greece that made him into a cosmopolitan with great contempt for narrow provincialism in artists, and his hobby as a field naturalist. Only the first of these intellectual wellsprings becomes problematic in the light of the study as a whole. In the Introduction Olshen claims that Fowles's discovery of the French post-war existential writers left its mark in the form of his continued sympathy for the "moralistic aspect of existential philosophy" (p. 6). While there is no disputing this assertion, there is a problem within the fiction itself, one which even Olshen has to admit in the case of The Magus: often the
language of the philosophical passages, "especially the existentialist jargon," (p. 57) is overly pretentious. Yet in *The Collector*, Olshen sees the ideas in the existentialist sections (in Miranda's discussion of G.P.'s philosophy) as too close to Fowles's own in *The Aristos*. In other words, he views Miranda as the author's mouthpiece and the "overly didactic passages" as a "stylistic flaw" (p. 25). However, to ignore here the pretentiousness of G.P., even as filtered through Miranda's admiration, is to ignore the "adolescent quality" of the philosophical spouting that Olshen does pick up in Nicholas Urfe's college-existentialism in *The Magus*. Of course, Urfe himself, from his later narratorial perspective, can also look back on this time and mock himself and his friends: "we argued about essence and existence and called a certain kind of inconsequential behavior existentialist." Urfe's awareness of the discrepancy between *talking* existentialism and *acting* it points to Fowles's own distinction. Usually in his fiction, *talk* of the issues of freedom, responsibility, and choice is deliberately tonally undermined, not to say mocked, while the plots of these very novels *enact* the same existential themes. Olshen seems to see this need for action on a thematic level ("the power of Sarah as well as Conchis lies not in what they preach, but what they do" [p. 88]), yet is unaware of its philosophical implications.

In the Introduction, Olshen describes Fowles's imagination as "densely associative" and his subsequent discussions of the novels both validate this statement and render it more precise, as he shows the author's range from the controlled "simplicity" of *The Collector* to the extravagant complexity of *The Magus*. The other quality of Fowles's imagination singled out here is its "highly erotic" nature. This eroticism is frequently mentioned in this study (pp. 8, 13, 14, 77, 92, etc.) though actual sexual scenes are relatively few in the fiction. While Olshen is right to point out that love and sex play significant roles in Fowles's fiction, it could be argued that they do so as part of a larger theme, that of love as possession or as freedom. The collector wants to possess Miranda. Charles too wants to possess the French lieutenant's woman, and the sexual implications of the word underline the close connection between sex and power for Fowles. And both are related to the god-like control of the novelist, the literary equivalent of the "god" in Arnold's "To Marguerite," quoted at the end of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Olshen convincingly argues that Fowles's mode of composition (working on several novels at once) could account for the consistency or even, he suggests, redundancy, of existentialist themes in the novels and of their translation into plot structure in the form of the repeated central moment of crisis in which choices must be made. An important observation that Olshen then makes (p. 12) - that *ethical* freedom for the characters is always explored simultaneously with *aesthetic* freedom for the reader - leads to the
one objection that cannot perhaps be attributed to the book's limitation of size. Olshen does see that Fowles accords fiction great power to involve the reader: the masque in *The Magus* is seen as having the same function for Urfe as the novel as a whole does for the reader (p. 55). Olshen mysteriously calls this function an "almost religious" one. If this is so, it is related to God only metaphorically and ironically in that the novelist is seen as a god-like creator and controller. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is perhaps the novel in which this connection is made most evident and in which Fowles's participation in the now long tradition of metafiction is most explicit. Yet this literary context is never mentioned by Olshen.

"Metafiction" refers to those novels about novels which simultaneously distance the reader and paradoxically force his conscious participation in the process of creation of the fictional world, making him acknowledge that the novel's world possesses as much "reality" and validity as the "real" world in which he lives. Olshen notes in passing the persistent references to or parodies of other works of literature in Fowles's fiction, but, oddly enough, never speculates on their function in the texts. He sees *The Collector's* references to Shakespeare's *Tempest* as "exclusively literary" (p. 25) in the "ironic correspondence" or inverted analogies of character and event. But surely such a textual game serves more than just a literary function, especially since Olshen himself has shown the inextricable connection between the aesthetic and the moral in Fowles's work? The ethical as well as literary discrepancy between the worlds and values of the two casts of characters is perceived by the reader as he superimposes the two texts. The function of this intertextuality is even more clear in the other literary context, this time omitted by Olshen. He sees a social dimension in the novel on a thematic and linguistic level but not in what is actually another serious "parody," this time of the class-oriented literature of the "angry young men" of Fowles's own generation.

Similarly, though Olshen mentions the echoes of *The Tempest* (pp. 44, 59) and the play on the various novelistic traditions (Gothic, realistic, philosophical, erotic, and mystery) in *The Magus* (p. 56), no attempt is made to explain their function. Although he notes the "experimental" quality - à *fa-nouveau roman* - in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, he perceives it as separate from the historical element (p. 65). Instead, one might argue, this Victorian dimension is the very vehicle for the experimentation. Fowles is not saying, through his Victorian-posing modern narrator, that the Victorian period is better or worse, morally or aesthetically, than the present. His interest, in the intertextual and interperiod references, is to mark the differences, to play one off against the other, much as Eliot did with the "fragments" shored against his ruins in the equally "parodic" *Waste Land*.

At the end of his discussion of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Olshen does remark: "In combination with the ambiguous narrative voice and the
tenuous fictional illusion [the multiple ending device] becomes a means of suggesting that the inventive contemporary novelist can write an experimental novel and still remain identifiably within the great tradition of the English novel" (p. 89). This is indeed true, but the author can only do so by enacting formally, once again, the theme of freedom in the structure of the novel's endings. This time it is not Sarah controlling Charles, but the narrator (and ultimately the author) controlling the reader, forcing both into a position of crisis, of choice — existential and hermeneutic. This is not Tristram Shandy's toying with or chiding of his reader; it is an enforced enactment of freedom both on a moral/existential level and on an aesthetic one. Fowles does not reveal himself to be a "writer's writer" (or an "academic's writer") only in The Ebony Tower, as Olshen suggests (p. 93). The function of the "parody" of the conventions of the mystery story in "The Enigma" is that of the Shakespearean play in the first novel — that is, one of reader counter-expectation and authorial marking of difference in literary/ethical values.

The discussions of the individual novels suffer somewhat from the mere mention in passing of these intertextual echoes and the neglect of their implications, but otherwise they are interesting and as informative as the format's restrictions allow. The plot outlines are brief, lively, and true to the letter and spirit of the text. Important remarks are made along the way regarding language — the collector's life-destroying power is seen in his use of entomological and hunting vocabulary; narrative technique — the style of the opening of The French Lieutenant's Woman is a mix of Victorian omniscience and modern cinematic points of view; and symbol and image patterns — the ending of the revised Magus is thus criticized as "more a conclusion... but less a summation of theme and image" (p. 61).

Olshen makes a good case for the argument that Daniel Martin marks a significant thematic and formal change in Fowles's work. It is the first novel to focus on adult - or middle-aged - love, marriage, and friendship. It is also the first named after an individual character rather than a power-figure designation (collector, magus, or "French lieutenant's woman," who controls the reader and Charles through this fictional identity). The narrative complexity here is unlike that of the previous novels and, though Olshen would not agree, perhaps less successful. Its flashbacks, one could argue, are more traditional than innovating. The interplay between first and third person voices, while explained in the text by Daniel's desire to see himself sometimes as others do, remains awkward and coyly "tricky" in a way that the overt game-playing of the narrator in The French Lieutenant's Woman rarely is, for there it is thematically and formally motivated by the existential and aesthetic contexts explicitly presented in Chapter 13. This is not to say that Daniel Martin necessarily marks a negative change in Fowles's work, but
only to point out that his least intertextual novel runs into a problem. The same moral/aesthetic link that preoccupies Fowles in the other novels is present here as well, but lacks the scaffolding provided by the "parodic" play of texts. Fowles must resort to explicit discussions of, for example, the differences between fiction and film, to bring out his concern for the meaning of freedom in life and art (though this explicitness does not seem to bother Olshen here, as it did in The Collector). In fact, Olshen ends the study with this statement: "Perhaps the new insistence in Daniel Martin on compassion and whole sight is the first step of this master stylist on the road to wisdom" (p. 120)—a claim appropriately as open-ended as the conclusions of Fowles's own novels.

The bibliography of both Fowles's writings and works devoted to them completes this brief yet substantial study of what Olshen obviously feels to be one of the major writers of modern fiction. His tempered enthusiasm and his admirable grace and clarity of expression make this book a valuable guide to students and general readers alike. One suspects that it is the restriction of format that most limits its value for more in-depth study of Fowles or of modern British fiction.

LINDA HUTCHEON /McMaster University

Louis Dudek, Selected Essays and Criticism (Ottawa: Tecumseh Press, 1978). ix, 380. $6.95 paper

As time goes by, the various gaps in the study of Canadian literature are being filled. A bit more than twenty years ago, people had questions as to whether McClelland and Stewart's New Canadian Library Series would find enough good Canadian material to reprint. When the journal Canadian Literature began, there were similar hesitations. Now the success of both has been joined by a variety of Canadian literary endeavours extending in all directions.

One problem with the two pioneers, as academic interest in Canadian works becomes more detailed, is that they tend to present the popular, rather than the esoteric, and the general, rather than the specific. A number of the necessary works of more narrowly academic interest have been provided by vehicles like the University of Toronto reprints, where high costs and limited sales are not seen as absolute barriers. Still, while most small publishers are concentrating on avant garde novelists and poets, there are a few who have made important contributions to our critical background.