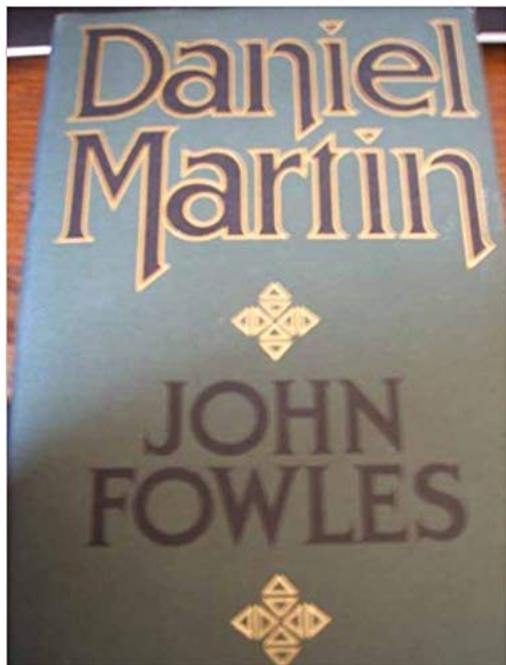


Daniel Martin *by* John FOWLES



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Author: John FOWLES

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Reviews of the *Daniel Martin* *by* John FOWLES

Mot

I had read this in the early '80's but couldn't remember it clearly. Now I know why: it really is not his best.

While the first half moves along nicely, as the interesting characters get developed and Fowles treats us to some snappy dialog and interesting disquisitions, the second half (as other reviewers have noted) goes on forever in a seemingly never-ending fog of philosophical self-flagellation. It's tough to describe what I felt without giving away plot spoilers, but really, if a ~45-year-old man can't figure out who he is, why should we have to read about it?* Maybe it all seemed mysterious or portentous to me in my 20's, but now it just seems self-indulgent.

On the plus side, Fowles shows more of the writing skills he is famous for - great sentences abound, and he challenges your intellect without being too much of a supercilious ass about it. He makes some trenchant observations about the movie business and especially about what it is (was?) like to be English in the world in the '70's. He makes even more direct comments about the differences between the English and Americans - some are not pretty, but all are thoughtful. You have to recall that even as late as the '70's, England was still recovering from the Depression and WWII and it wasn't until the '80's that they could be said to have dug out completely and fully joined the modern world - which for good or bad at that point had been shaped largely by American ideas.

So I wonder if Fowles had written this book 20 years later, would he have used the same characters and reached the same conclusions? Would he have updated it? Or would the book have been more a lament for a lost England?

And would it have been shorter?

* SPOILER - I laughed out loud at the commenter who said the reason a main character killed himself was because he heard this book in his head and needed it to stop!

Cordaron

This highly introspective novel covers so much ground and so many facets of psychology, culture, sex, love, history that to write any sort of review that approaches the comprehensive would mean for the reviewer to write a book of his own, which is not the place of an Amazon review. I will say this definitively: The book is for readers who love to read, have been doing so all their lives, and don't mind spending hours, days being lost in what some might term overly erudite verbiage. I suppose it also helps to understand the English/American cultural differences, to have, like the eponymous Daniel Martin, been born and to have come of age in England, but to have spent most of one's life in America. Such has been my lot in life, but, regardless, the book is not really one that I suspect most Amazon reviewers or readers will bother with at all. So, I shall simply present the aspects of the book that seem most salient to me and let the rare Amazon reader who is interested in Fowles and in this type of work take what s/he may from my take on it.

The first thing that struck me in the early goings here was the contrast drawn between, as it has often been drolly put, two races separated by a common language. Daniel Martin as narrator puts it thus:

"Other races look at themselves in the mirror, and either live with the reflection or do something practical to improve it. We paint an ideal, or a dream self on the glass and then wallow in the discrepancy. Nothing distinguishes us more clearly from the Americans, nothing characterises us better than the very different ways we use our shared language - the way they use it as a tool, even when they are being poetic, and the way we treat it as a poem, even when we are using it as a tool;"

This is obviously very broad-brush differentiation, yet it is, more often than not, quite true, though I noticed on my last trip back to England that the English seem to have become more Americanised in this respect, a subjective impression. In any event, the American reader will have plenty of pages of very English dialogue to pore over here to see if this judgement, which Martin retracts and then restates as he does with almost all his pronouncements, holds true or nay.

One way to look at this book is as a fleshing out of the Socratic dictum that the unexamined life is not worth living. Martin and all the characters herein have deep, submerged, inner lives which they are in the constant state of examining from the book's start to its finish. There's a dreamy, contemplative tone to the entire work, a frequent sense of the past, the passing, the to come all being merged, time and again, in retrospective reflection.

What Martin says of his own sort of psyche obtains for all the major characters herein:

"They live not life, but others lives; drive not down the freeways of determined fact, but drift and scholar-gypsy through the landscapes of the hypothetical, through all the pasts and futures of each present. Only one of each can be what happened and what will happen, but to such men they are the least important."

If you are a scholar-gypsy by reading and temperament, there's a chance this foray into inner worlds may indeed be your cup of tea, glass of Scotch, drag of literary tobacco.

Drink and inhale deeply.

Xanzay

I came to this book after reading Fowles' 'The Tree,' which I loved. I found 'Daniel Martin' fascinating and loved it. Yes, it requires patience, but I found the journey with Fowles well worth the effort. He does switch from first person to third to other voices, and, as one reviewer commented, there are times when it takes more concentration to sort out who is speaking. I was drawn also to his love of Devon, which is featured in the book. The section on Egypt was magically done; felt as though I was there. Highly recommended.

Najinn

This semi-autobiographical novel shows Fowles at his lucid, erudite engrossing best. Set in London and Hollywood, it tells the story of screen writer and author-manquee Daniel Martin and his tangled love affairs with two sisters, which goes all the way back to their days at Oxford. Great characters, beautiful writing, ideas that resonate, settings-- from L.A. to rural England to Egypt -- so real you'll feel like you visited them yourself. A unique mind and imagination delivers a profound, indelible experience. This is a book you'll come back to again and again, and it alwaysd rewards re-reading.

Dagdalas

I purchased this book for my husband a Christmas present. He owned this book years ago but with moves and changing lifestyle he misplaced it. He was thrilled receiving it and it was in great shape.

Faell

As usual John Fowles proved me he was the master of writing of exceptional novels.

Nea

Fowles is such an amazing writer. This book goes into such great depth and the characters have such a vibrant life it feels like I'm watching a well written movie. This work stands the test of time I think the book is in good condition. Thus, it is OK. I love John Fowels and I think it is one of the his best books

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