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# THE FANTASTIC IN *THE MAGUS* BY JOHN FOWLES

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THE FANTASTIC IN *THE MAGUS* BY JOHN FOWLES

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Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan englantilaisen kirjailijan John Fowlesin romaania *The Magus*. Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää missä määrin kyseinen teos kuuluu fantasiakirjallisuuden piiriin. Lähtökohtana on se, että *The Magus* on fantasiakirjallisuutta, mutta koska kyseisen genren luonteen vuoksi tarkkoihin määritelmiin on vaikea päästä, päämääränä on pikemminkin määritellä fantastisuuden aste kyseisen teoksen kohdalla.

Taustakirjallisuus koostuu lähinnä kolmen fantasiakirjallisuuden tutkijan, Tzvetan Todorovin, Rosemary Jacksonin ja Eric S. Rabkinin, teorioista, mutta heidän lisäkseen käsitellään myös muiden tutkijoiden teorioita ja näkökantoja fantasiakirjallisuuteen. Peruskysymyksistä kolme edellämainittua ovat pitkälti samaa mieltä, kuten esimerkiksi fantasiakirjallisuuden teemoista ja fantasian ja todellisuuden läheisestä suhteesta, mutta kaikilla on kuitenkin oma lähtökohtansa lähestymisessään fantasiakirjallisuuteen. Todorov näkee sen lähinnä historiallisena ja melko suppeana genrenä, jota ei enää ole olemassa nykypäivänä, kun taas Jackson ja Rabkin pitävät fantasiaa laaja-alaisena kirjallisuuden lajina, joka alalajeineen ulottuu kaikille taiteen aloille. He painottavat erityisesti fantasian merkitystä todellisuuden muuntajana ja sen perussääntöjen rikkojana.

Tutkimuskohteena on yksi romaani, edellämainittu John Fowlesin *The Magus*. Tutkimusongelmaa lähestyttiin tutkimalla *The Magusta* ja siitä löytyviä fantasiakirjallisuuden piirteitä yksityiskohtaisesti ja vertaamalla niitä teoriataustaan ja edellämainittujen tutkijoiden teorioihin. Lopputuloksena voidaan sanoa, että *The Magusista* löytyy selkeitä fantasiakirjallisuuden piirteitä, vaikka se ei olekaan tyylipuhdasta fantasiaa. Todorovin määritelmän mukaan teos kuuluisi fantasialle läheiseen "uncanny" genreen, koska lopussa fantastisille tapahtumille löytyy luonnollinen selitys.

Asiasanat: John Fowles. fantastic literature. fantastic themes. hesitation

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Defining a genre - be it a literary, film, painting or otherwise - is hardly ever an easy task and this is more than true in the case of fantasy literature. With its various subgenres and termimology varying from one scholar to another it is difficult to place fantasy literature within the field of literature in general and there is no simple, unanimous answer to the question of what fantasy literature is.

The purpose of this study is to examine one novel, *The Magus*, by the English writer John Fowles, in terms of fantasy literature. As stated above, as a genre fantasy literature is very broad and complex, therefore a closer look will be taken at its characteristics and the differences and similarities in the definitions by some central literary critics in the field.

I intend to show that *The Magus* belongs to the genre of fantasy literature, even though there are some critics who claim that the fantastic has no place in the modern world and that it has disappeared along the technical and scientific development. Sir Walter Scott (as reported by Delbert D. Phillips 1982:6) believed in the early nineteenth century that the belief in and the need for the supernatural "will lessen as mankind becomes more enlightened." This can be proved wrong by looking at the prolific writing of fantastic literature that still continues in our days. The fantastic as a literary genre is as old as literature itself and even older than the novel form, and it has changed and evolved during

its lifespan, and it continues to do so. Moreover, it is a universal genre of literature, and to mention just a few names, for example the Mexican Jorge Luis Borges is a fine representative of fantasy literature of the Hispanic world; so is for the Russian world N.V. Gogol and especially his novel *The Nose* and, in the words of Eric S. Rabkin (1976:226), for the German and French speaking readers "the paradigmatic Fantasist is the ghastly [E.T.A] Hoffmann."

The starting point of this study are the views of three leading literary critics of fantasy literature - namely Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson and Eric S. Rabkin - and their criteria for defining the genre. Using their theories I intend to investigate how they can be applied to *The Magus*, very much a modern novel (in the sense that the novel was published in the 20th century, moreover, I will be using the revised edition of 1977), published in the world of much greater knowledge of science, technology and psychology than for example was *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, a classic amongst the works of fantasy literature, i.e. in a world full of logical, natural explanations for seemingly supernatural events.

On one hand, the choice of the topic of my study is based on pure personal interest: interest in this particular author, this particular novel and the genre. On the other hand, the divergence of opinion among the scholars in the field of fantasy literature aroused my interest, especially Tzvetan Todorov's claim that fantasy literature does not exist anymore in our times, that its lifespan lasted

only until the end of the nineteeth century. I disagree with him strongly, as do many others, and therefore the matter clearly called for closer examination.

# 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FANTASTIC

## 2.1 Difficulties in Defining the Fantastic

As stated above, defining the fantastic is not an easy task because it is a literary genre with various subgenres and sometimes divisions are hard to make. Moreover, the differences between the subgenres are not clearcut. However, this problem goes beyond the fantastic, because defining a genre in any given context is not as simple as it might seem at first. As Martin Montgomery & al (1992:169) say, even though "in the most general sense 'genre' simply means the sort, or type, of a text" (the word 'genre'comes from the Latin 'genus' which means 'kind' or 'type'), this definition nevertheless raises the problem of how to decide the sort or the type. Montgomery & al (1992:169) continue:

> how can this [i.e. which genre we are dealing with] be decided? Do the formal elements of a text themselves signal how to label it, or is our classification a result simply of our own expectations or individual perceptions? These questions pose issues which stretch far beyond the obvious convenience of being able to sort texts into types (e.g. for marketing, educational or critical reasons). In fact, they raise deep questions about the relationship between fixed, formal properties of a text and relational properties which are the result of our ways of seeing or thinking about it.

In this case of the fantastic the difficulties start with the definition of the concepts of 'real' and 'fantastic'. Reality is a very subjective thing, as Robert L. Nadeau (1980-1:269) has put it: "...the real in human terms can be nothing

more than our subjectively based conception of it." For example, a few hundreds of years ago witchcraft was accepted more or less as a normal aspect of everyday life, and yet the mere idea of space travelling must have seemed impossible and supernatural. Today the case is quite the contrary. To give another example: according to L. Ron Hubbard (as reported by Eric S. Rabkin, 1976:18), some Scientologists regard time travel as a learnable skill, a view that most of the population of the Western world does not share and is more likely to see it as something belonging to the world of science fiction. This leads us to the point that Rosemary Jackson (1981:3) emphasizes: change is inevitable in everything in life - including literature - and since the fantastic is just like any other form of literature, i.e. it is produced within and determined by its social context, change is only natural within the genre of fantasy literature as well. Starting with the broadest possible definition, it can be said that all literature is fantastic, because all imaginary activity is fantastic (Jackson 1981:13). This is supported by the fact that the word 'fantastic' comes from Latin, 'phantasticus', which derives from the Ancient Greek word φανζαστικοσ (Modern Greek φανταστικοσ, which means 'imaginary', 'fantastic'), meaning that which is made visible, visionary, unreal. In other words, fantastic makes visible what is usually invisible or repressed. Here we find a close connection to the German word 'unheimlich' which is translated as 'uncanny' in English. To start with, the opposite to 'unheimlich', as Sigmund Freud (in *The Gothick Novel: A Casebook*, 1990) explains, the word 'heimlich' belongs to two sets of ideas: not only does it mean that which is familiar and congenial but also that which is

concealed and kept out of sight. Therefore 'unheimlich' can be seen to be opposite to both.

In the following chapters I will look at the theory of fantasy literature mainly from the viewpoint of three literary critics, Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson and Eric S. Rabkin. The discussion will show that there is some difference of opinion between these scholars about the definition of fantasy literature and even its existence in our days. In addition I will be looking briefly into some other scholars' views on fantasy literature

## 2.2 Does the Fantastic Still Exist? - Tzvetan Todorov

Tzvetan Todorov's book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973) is a controversial but nevertheless highly esteemed study on fantasy literature. It was originally published in French in 1970, and in my opinion the original name - *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* - is more accurate and to the point than the English translation because the book is exactly an introduction to fantasy literature in general.

In Todorov's opinion hesitation is of major importance in the fantastic (1973:26): "There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect." Todorov (1973:25) calls this hesitation "the very heart of the fantastic" and says that the fantastic

occupies the duration of this hesitation. The moment we choose between the alternatives we leave the realm of pure fantasy and enter some other genre, or a subgenre of the fantastic.

Moreover, Todorov sets three requirements for the fantastic which also include the presence of hesitation. Hesitation can be experienced by the reader or by the character, or by both, and therefore the integration of the reader into the world of the characters is essential. According to Todorov (1973:33), the first one of the three requirements is that the reader must hesitate between natural and supernatural explanations to the events described in the story. Secondly, the same hesitation can also be experienced by the character of the story and thus it could be said that the reader identifies herself with the character. At this point, hesitation becomes one of the themes of the work. The third requirement concerns the reader's attitude towards the work at hand: a work of the fantastic must be read literally, the reader must reject allegorical or poetic interpretations of the work. Both allegory and poetry are adjacent genres to the fantastic. Moreover, as Todorov (1973:75) says; "Not all fictions and not all literal meanings are linked to the fantastic; but the fantastic is always linked to both fiction and literal meaning." The second requirement of the above-mentioned three is "optional", the first and the third constitute the genre, but according to Todorov (1973:33), most works of the fantastic fullfill all three conditions.

As stated above, Todorov claims that the fantastic only lasts during the hesitation, before the reader reaches a conclusion. When this decision is made,

at the end of the book at the latest, the fantasy ceases to exist and we have some other genre to label the work with (Todorov, 1973:41-42). If the reader finds a natural explanation for the supernatural phenomena described, the work belongs to the genre of the 'uncanny'. If, on the contrary, the reader accepts the supernatural events and there is no natural explanation, we enter the genre of the 'marvellous'. Moreover, Todorov makes the following subdivisions:

uncanny - fantastic-uncanny - fantastic-marvellous - marvellous,

and the pure fantastic is found between the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvellous. The difference between the two "main" genres and the transitory ones is that in the latter the hesitation characteristic of the true fantastic is sustained for a long period of time, but ultimately ends in the uncanny or the marvelous. The problem of definition rises again here because these genres are not clearly delimited. Of the above-mentioned genres, Todorov (1973:54-57) goes on to divide the marvellous into four: 'the hyberbolic marvellous', which in his words "does not do excessive violence to reason" (Todorov 1973:55), i.e. the supernatural is created against phenomena familiar to the reader. In 'the exotic marvellous' the supernatural events are reported without being represented as such, whereas 'the instrumental marvellous' uses technological developments that seem supernatural in the period described. It is very close to 'the scientific marvellous' or 'science fiction', as it is called nowadays. The difference is that in science fiction the events are explained "in a rational manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not acknowledge" (Todorov, 1973:56).

This type of division leads to two problems: first of all, a work of the fantastic can only be fantastic on the first read, the second time we already know the explanation or whether there is one. Additionally, if this is the case, there is no fantasy literature, because all books belong to some neighbouring genre (such as marvellous or uncanny) in the end. Todorov does admit (1973:41) that fantasy is hardly an autonomous genre.

In spite of the above-mentioned problems Todorov lists characteristic features of the fantastic but does not claim to be presenting them all - an impossible task perhaps - and prefers to talk about general features (Todorov 1973:76). First of all 'exaggeration' is a way of creating a supernatural effect. An example that Todorov (1973:77) uses is that a person in a novel is thirsty but, instead of saying that she drinks a great deal, the quantity of water described is so enormous, that it is supernatural, for example that she drinks a whole lake dry. Secondly, the fantastic uses the literal meaning of 'figurative expression'. If in a work of fantastic it is said that a person turns into a statue, it is not just a figure of speech, she in fact becomes a statue. Thirdly, the use of the represented (or dramatized) narrator 'I' is frequent in the fantastic and this leads to a "double game" because a "simple" character can lie, whereas the narrator can not. This leads the reader into doubting whether to believe or not. Todorov says that this creates a situation where "the reader believe[s] without really believing." (Todorov 1973:83). Furthermore, the use of the first person narrator facilitates the necessary identification of the reader with the characters. As readers "we do

not doubt the narrator's testimony. Instead we seek, with him, a rational explanation for these bizarre phenomena" (Todorov 1973:85).

Todorov (1973:92) discusses the functions of the fantastic in a work of fantasy literature and what the fantastic elements contribute to a work. First of all, the fantastic produces a certain effect on the reader which other genres usually can not evoke, for example fear, horror or simply curiosity. It also serves the narration by maintaining the suspense and "permits a particularly dense organization of the plot" (Todorov 1973:92). Moreover, the fantastic elements have a tautological function: they permit the description of a fantastic universe that does not exist outside language.

According to Todorov (1973:93), the themes of the fantastic are homologous with the literary themes in general since "it is reasonable to assume that what the fantastic speaks of is not qualitatively different from what literature in general speaks of." The difference being that the fantastic represents an experiece of limits. Todorov (1973:100-101) continues to say that there is "a suprising unanimity of method" among the classification of the themes of fantasy literature, which can be simply listed as follows: ghosts, phantoms, the devil and his allies, vampires, werewolves, witches and witchcraft, animal spectres, parts of the human body, the pathology of personality, the interplay of invisible and visible, the alterations of causality, space and time, regression. Caillois (as reported by Todorov 1973:100) has a more detailed classification: his thematic classes include the pact with the devil; the anguished soul that

requires, in order to achieve peace, that a certain action be performed (often a payback or revenge for the sins of forefathers); the spectre doomed to an incoherent and endless journey; death personified appearing among the living; the indefinable, invisible "thing" that haunts; vampires, i.e. the dead that suck the blood of the living; the statue or a figure that suddenly comes to life; the magician's curse; the phantom-woman appearing from the beyond, seductive and deadly; the inversion of the realms of dream and reality; the room, apartment, house, or street erased from space, the cessation or repetition of time. The list is long and perhaps tells about the difficulty of actually classifying the themes of the fantastic, therefore the so-called classification is often reduced to a mere list-making. The themes of the fantastic seem to be limitless, as in literature in general. However, these lists give an overall idea of what kind of themes are used to create the fantastic.

However, the themes of the fantastic can be roughly divided into two: those of the self, the 'I' and those of the other, the 'not-I'. Todorov (1973:106, 120) states that the themes of the self are united by their co-presence and the fragility of the limit between matter and mind. These include a special causality, pan-determinism, multiplication of the personality, collapse of the limit between subject and object and the transformation of time and space. Here Todorov makes an interesting comparison between the above-mentioned themes and the world of a drug-user, a psychotic or an infant, i.e. the fantastic world can be compared or it can be created by the use of intoxicating substances, for

example, in the case where there is a natural explanation. In the (sub)genre of the uncanny, the natural explanation can often be found in druguse or madness.

According to Todorov (1973:139), the themes of the self are about "the relation between man and the world", and the themes of the other concern "the relation of man with his desire - and thereby with his unconsciousness." Sexual desire can have enormous power and often there is a punishment for this excess sexual desire. Todorov (1973:127) points out the connection between excess sexual desire and the supernatural: the supernatural always appears in an experience of limits, in "superlative" states, as does sexual desire, when it "reach[es] an unsuspected power" (Todorov 1973:126). Fantasy literature does not only deal with the intense and so-called normal sexuality between a man and a woman. Incest is a recurring phenomenon, for example in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* incestuous relations are implied between Usher and his twinsister Madeline. Also homosexuality is dealt with quite often, perhaps because earlier on, when it was even a greater taboo than it is nowadays, fantasy literature was a good way of talking about it, in a "veiled" form. A third variety is the 'l'amour à trois' type of sexual activity and it can be found on several occasions in the tales of the *Arabian Nights*, for example. Necrophilia is also included in the themes of the other, but it is often presented indirectly: love for a statue, for a painting etc. or in the form of a love consummated with vampires or the living dead. Todorov does not mention pedophilia, but I would place it under the themes of the other as well. For example in Henry James's *The Turn*

*of the Screw*, the feelings of the governess towards her pupil Miles have sometimes been interpreted as sexual in nature.

Todorov (1973:143) calls these two, the themes of the self and the themes of the other, networks of themes and divides them into abstract (for example sexuality, death) and concrete (for example vampires, the devil) terms. Furthermore, Todorov emphasizes their co-presence more than the relation of signification between the two groups (i.e. "the vampire means necrophilia" -type of signification searching). The network of themes of the self corresponds to the system of perception-consciousness, whereas the network of the themes of the other corresponds to the system of unconscious impulses (Todorov 1973:149). Therefore the first one of the above-mentioned networks can be linked with the universe of childhood and the world of drugs. Sexuality is a more complex issue; as stated by Todorov (1973:146), it belongs to the second network of themes, the themes of the other. However, one can hardly claim that an infant could live in a world without desire, but the desire is "autoerotic", i.e. this desire lacks an external object. As regards to psychosis, we are again on uncertain terrain because, as Todorov (1973:146) says, the descriptions of the psychotic world are made from the viewpoint of the "normal person." The same applies to childhood, it is looked at from the viewpoint of an adult, someone who is not in the world of the child herself.

Todorov does not only try to make a general framework of **what** the fantastic is, he also looks into the **why**, i.e. the functions of this literary genre. According

to him (Todorov 1973:158), the fantastic has a social function and a literary function. The fantastic gives a writer a chance to describe things that could not be mentioned in realistic terms, as was pointed out above in the connection of homosexuality. As a further proof for this statement, just looking at the themes of the fantastic, it can be immediately seen that they are all more or less "forbidden." Todorov (1973:160) makes an interesting claim that in our modern world psychoanalysis has replaced the fantastic. As one can talk about excessive sexual desire in therapy for example, there is no need to resort to the devil.

According to Todorov (1973:162), there are three literary functions of the fantastic. The first of these is a pragmatic function: the supernatural disturbs or keeps the reader in suspense; the second one is a semantic function: the supernatural constitutes its own manifestation, it is an auto-designation; the third function is syntactical: the supernatural enters into the development of the narrative.

Finally Todorov (1973:166) claims that the fantastic does not exist anymore:

> ...whereas the supernatural and the genre which accepts it literally, the marvelous, have always existed in literature and are much in evidence today, the fantastic has had a relatively brief life span. It appeared in a systematic way around the end of the eighteenth century with Cazotte; a century later, we find the last aesthetically satistying examples of the genre in Maupassant's tales.

Even though Todorov says that the fantastic does not exist anymore, there are scholars who disagree with him. Perhaps it is again a question of definition: the

fantastic is difficult to define and there are no clear-cut boundaries and opinions differ from one critic to another.

### 2.3 The Fantastic as a Literature of Subversion - Rosemary Jackson

Rosemary Jackson is regarded as one of the important scholars in the field of fantasy literature. Her study *Fantasy - The Literature of Subversion* was published in 1981, almost a decade later than Tzvetan Todorov's "basic guide" to the fantastic. Rosemary Jackson has been clearly influenced by Todorov and his studies. Furthermore, she (Jackson, 1981:5) calls Todorov's book "the most important and influential critical study of fantasy". However, she disagrees with Todorov at some points and critisizes his views on certain issues.

Rosemary Jackson's (1981:3) starting point, which she emphasizes, is that, like any other form of literature, fantasy is produced within, and determined by its social context, and moreover, fantasy is transformed through the historical position of the authors. Jackson also mentions other determinants apart from the social ones: historical, economic, political and sexual. It is only natural that these factors leave their mark in the works of a writer because fantasy writers, just like writers of any other form of literature, do not live and create their art in a vacuum, but are naturally affected by their environment.

Jackson (1981:3) sees fantasy as a literature of desire and in expressing desire it can function in two different ways. First, it can "*tell of*, manifest or show

desire" or "it can *expel* desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity". This overlaps with Todorov's social function of the fantastic, because Jackson (1981:4) agrees with him in that it "traces the unsaid and the the unseen of culture". Fantasy is also literature of subversion, it has a subversive function, i.e. it does not invent anything, it inverts elements of this world, of reality and by doing this it produces something strange and unfamiliar, something fantastic, it turns 'heimlich' into 'unheimlich'.

Even though Jackson clearly admires Todorov's work she also critisizes it. Jackson stresses the social and political implications of literature and feels that Todorov pays no attention to them. Another fact that Jackson (1981:6) points out is that fantasy deals with unconscious material and therefore Jackson sees the reference to psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic readings of a text important, which Todorov fails to do.

Jackson (1981:5) says that the similarities in works of fantasy literature on levels of theme and structure are more than coincidental. Nevertheless, she prefers to borrow the term 'mode' from linguistics and use it instead of 'genre' in regards to fantasy literature because, as she says there is no ideal theoretical genre to which all fantasies would conform. Instead, she says that there "is no abstract entity called 'fantasy'; there is only a range of different works which have similar structural characteristics and which seem to be generated by similar unconscious desires." (Jackson, 1981:7-8).

Jackson's (1981:7) division of fantasy literature is somewhat different to that of Todorov. First of all, fantasy is a literary mode from which a number of related genres emerge. Jackson compares this mode to the Saussurean term in linguistics, 'langue', and the related genres would be 'paroles'. These paroles are romance literature or the marvellous (fairy tales, science fiction), fantastic literature (works of such writers as Poe, Kafka, Maupassant, Lovecraft) and related tales of abnormal psychic states, delusion, hallucination, etc. Later on Jackson 81981:34) defines fantastic in more detail:

> Fantastic narratives confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic. They assert that what they are telling is real - relying upon all the conventions of realistic fiction to do so - and then they proceed to break that assumption of realism by introducing what - within those terms - is manifestly unreal. They pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world...

Therefore the starting point is 'real' and 'reality' and the etymology of fantastic points to un-real. However, it must always be linked to the real and rational to create the suspense, or the hesitation, as Todorov would put it. If a tale is too incredible, the reader will dismiss the story as mere nonsense, like the story of a man with literally no heart. (Jackson, 1981:27.) In the words of Dostoevsky (as reported by Jackson, 1981:27), "the fantastic must be so close to the real that you almost have to believe in it." Violation of the groundrules of reality create the fantastic.

Whereas Todorov talks of the necessity of the first person narrator "I", Jackson (1981:31) draws our attention to the "problem of the

perception/vision/knowledge of the protagonist and narrator and reader of the fantastic." For example in Edgar Allan Poe's tale *The Tell-Tale Heart* there is the protagonist, the I, and the old man, the he, but for example when the protagonist talks about the wild beating of the heart of the old man, he is in fact talking about himself. Furthermore, there is the wordplay with the "Evil Eye", i.e. with the identical pronunciation of "eye" and "I". As Jackson (1981:38) puts it: "Perception becomes increasingly confused, signs are vulnerable to multiple and contradictory interpretation".

This leads to the concept of 'non-signification' (Jackson, 1981:40). Jackson says that in a realistic narrative the gap between a signifier and signified is closed, so to speak, and in fantasy it is left open. To give an example of this non-signification, 'thingless names', is Lewis Carroll and his *Alice* books and the nonsensical (**non**-sense) poems, *Hunting of the Snark* for example. The fantastic does this - enters the area of non-signification - also by "attempting to articulate 'the unnameable', the 'nameless things' or horror fiction, attempting to visualize the unseen, or by establishing a disjunction of word and meaning through a play upon 'thingless names'" (Jackson, 1981:41). For example in *Dracula* and in some of Poe's stories there are unnameable horrors or things: the 'It', the 'He', the 'thing', the 'something' which cannot be described.

Jackson (1981:42-44) not only talks of the themes of the fantastic but also of the topography of the fantastic world, and the principal feature seems to be a preoccupation with problems of vision and visibility. Many fantasies introduce

mirrors, glasses, reflections, portraits, eyes that distort the view of the familiar world changing it into something other. Mirrors are often used to introduce a double or a 'Doppelgänger', examples of which are Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and Poe's *William Wilson.* Fantastic topography also includes a place or 'an enclosure' (Jackson, 1981:46-47) where the fantastic is the norm instead of being deviation of the norm. For example Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher* and Stoker's *Dracula* use this device to generate maximum terror and transformation.

Jackson (1981:47) goes on to explain how chronological time is similarly exploded and time past, present and future lose their historical sequence and turn into "an eternal present." Salvador Dali's dissolving watches are a good graphic example of this phenomenon.

The themes of the fantastic in literature, according to Jackson (1981:48), revolve around the problem of making visible the un-seen, or articulating the un-said. Jackson continues that it would be impossible to list comprehensively all the semantic features of the fantastic; however, it is easier to categorize its thematic elements. Hesitation is to Todorov fantasy's defining feature, Jackson calls it fantasy's central thematic issue: "an uncertainty as to the nature of the 'real'". Jackson (1981:49) clusters the themes in the following way: 1) invisibility, 2) transformation, 3) dualism and 4) good versus evil. These generate 'recurrent motifs' (which Todorov lists as themes): ghosts, shadows, vampires, werewolves, doubles, partial selves, reflections, enclosures, monsters,

beasts, cannibals, in similar fashion to Todorov. Also transgressive impulses (incest, necrophilia, androgyny, cannibalism, recidivism, narcissism) and "abnormal" psychological states (hallucination, dream, insanity, paranoia) derive from these motifs. Moreover, gender differences of male and female are subverted and generic distinctions between animal, vegetable and mineral can be blurred.

Jackson (1981:51) also acknowledges the distinction between the themes of the self, the 'I' and the themes of the other, the 'not-I'. According to her, the themes of the self deal with problems of consciousness, of vision and perception and the themes of the other deal with problems generated by desire, by the unconscious. Jackson (1981:58) sees two kinds of myths in the modern fantastic. In the first the source of otherness ('other' being traditionally linked to evil), of threat, is in the self, in the I (e.g. Poe's *Ligeia*, Shelley's *Frankestein*). The second kind of myth is that the fear originates in a source external to the subject; the self suffers an attack of some sort, which makes it part of the other (e.g. Stoker's *Dracula*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis*).

Jackson (1981:61) sees psychoanalytical perspectives important when dealing with the fantastic and sees the omission of this aspect a grave shortcoming in Todorov's study. Her argument is that, since the fantastic deals with profoundly unconscious material, these issues can only be understood by turning to psychoanalysis. The term 'uncanny' has been used in philosophy and in psychoanalytical writing "to indicate a disturbing, vacuous area." (Jackson

1981:63). According to Freud (as reported by Jackson 1981:66-67), many of the uncanny, and fantastic, features are produced by a chararacter's unconscious fears. Also outside the western cultures there are similar mythical and magical products that have the same function. The uncanny is used to express drives which have to be repressed for the sake of cultural continuity.

Jackson (1981:72) sees fantastic corresponding to the first stage of Freud's evolutionary model, which is the stage of a magical and animistic thought mode when "primitive man and the young child have no sense of difference between self and other, subject and other worlds." Therefore, fantasy moves towards an ideal of undifferentation and this is one of fantasy's defining characteristics. Freud (as reported by Jackson 1981:72-73) sees this desire for undifferentation as the most fundamental drive in man, "a drive towards a state of inorganism." Jung termed this desire as 'entropic'. According to Jackson (1981:73), especially modern fantasy is "attracted" to an entropic state (for example the writings of Marquis de Sade).

From the above-mentioned "pull towards entropy" derive many of the thematic clusters of the fantastic, changes of form for example. Jackson (1981:81) states that for this reason metamorphosis plays a large part in fantastic literature. However, she continues (Jackson 1981:82) to say that these changes are not metaphorical; the fantastic itself is **not** a metaphorical type of literature.

In realistic fiction there are "full-blooded, three-dimensional 'rounded' characters" (Jackson 1981:82), whereas fantasy is full of characters with unstable forms, whose identities are never definitely established, fragmented selves. This is not only a thematic device of the fantastic. As Jackson (1981:82) says, it is "an attack upon unified 'character'" and it is this "subversion of unities of 'self' which constitutes the most radical transgressive function of the fantastic."

As to Todorov's claim that the fantastic does not exist anymore, Jackson (1981:165) has an unambigious answer: "Fantasy...has not disappeared..., but it has assumed different forms."

### 2.4 Breaking the Ground Rules - Eric S. Rabkin

The American scholar Eric S. Rabkin has studied and written about fantasy literature extensively and published his study *The Fantastic in Literature* in 1976. His views and findings do not differ a great deal from those of Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson, nevertheless he does emphasize some features in a somewhat different manner. Therefore, taking a closer look at his work will not be mere repetition of the ideas of Todorov and Jackson.

Every experience of art has an affect (in the psychological sense of the word) on us, and Rabkin (1976:ix) says that by isolating the affect that fantasy has, it is possible to reveal what is special about fantasy.

In defining the fantastic Rabkin has two major criteria: its relationship to reality and the characters' reaction to the fantastic phenomena. Rabkin (1976:6-8) makes a point of talking about the ground rules, and not only the ground rules of reality, but those of the narrative in question, which he also calls the 'decorum'. Breaking these ground rules of the narrative creates the fantastic affect. He makes a distinction between the 'unexpected' (which literally means not-expected), the 'dis-expected' and the 'anti-expected'. Unexpected occurrences do not create a fantastic affect, neither does the dis-expected but it is closer to fantasy than unexpected. For example jokes depend on the dis-expected. Anti-expected occurrences (e.g. someone who is dead speaks) take us to the presence of the fantastic. Rabkin (1976:12) calls this phenomenon a 180 degree reversal of the ground rules, which is his basic starting point to the definition of the fantastic. Moreover, because the fantastic is a direct reversal of ground rules, (Rabkin, 1976:14-15) it is in part determined by those ground rules.

For identifying the fantastic, Rabkin (1976:24) has three classes of 'signal': signals of the characters (astonishment, suprise, shock), signals of the narrator and signals of the implied author (certain narrative structures). Sometimes events are fantastic because they appear so to the narrator, even if they were perfectly normal to us.

When Rabkin (1976:27) says that the fantastic reveals "the truth of the human heart" he is talking about the unconscious, the dark side of human beings, that also Todorov and Jackson discuss. He (Rabkin, 1976:29) also makes the important observation that "the fantastic has a place in any narrative genre, but that genre to which the fantastic is exhaustively central is the class of narratives we call Fantasy."

Therefore, fantastic elements are present in many different types of narratives but not all of them belong to the genre of fantasy literature (Jackson does not acknowledge fantasy as a genre, she calls it a mode but for Rabkin it is a defineable genre). For example in fairy tales there are anti-expected recurrences but the characters do not show astonishment or suprise, and for this reason they are not part of fantasy literature. On the other hand, sometimes they are regarded as a subgenre of the fantastic.

The fantastic often functions as an 'escape', an escape from prison of the mind created by boredom (Rabkin 1976:42). Traditionally adventure stories, detective stories, tales of fantasy, pornography, westerns, science fiction and, when read for pleasure by adults, fairy tales are counted as escape literature. Of course they are not all fantasy. For example pornography (Rabkin 1976:50) relies more on the dis-expected than anti-expected, whereas horror fiction (e.g. Poe's *The Black Cat*) contradicts possibility quite often and therefore it is more radically fantastic than pornography. Detective fiction is marked by a "sense of knowable regularity" (Rabkin 1976:59): detective stories appear to be explicitly fantastic

and then this fantastic quality is naturalized by explanation within a set of ground rules and by the end of the story an order is established. The same applies to fairy tales. For example *Red Riding Hood* offers an ordered world, then the order is disturbed and by the end of the story the huntsman has re-established the order by killing the wolf and saving the Red Riding Hood.

Rabkin (1976:73) regards fantasy as the continuing diametric reversal of the ground rules within a narrative world and, if escape literature is based on this fantastic reversal, it is to an important degree fantastic. However, not all escape literature is fantastic, for example pornography is often, according to Rabkin (1976:73), "merely the too-good-to-be-hoped-for accumulation of the dis-expected".

Rabkin (1976:133,137) talks about "the continuum of the fantastic" and he, too, acknowledges the problem in defining fantasy as a genre. Many genres overlap with the fantastic, to a greater or a lesser extent. Rabkin cites detective stories and science fiction as examples. Nevertheless, he sees the urge to create a special genre for fantasy even though many fantasies can be said to belong to some other genre as well. This all comes down to the question of definition, whether to call science fiction a separate genre or a sub-genre of the fantastic. Rabkin (1976:137) regards for example science fiction as a separate genre and says that it is "continuous up to and including Fantasy." Furthermore, this continuity explains some of the terminological dilemmas about the fantastic, for example fairy tales seem fantastic but they are not truly fantasies. Simply, some

works are more fantastic than others, they are situated differently in the continuum of the fantastic. Whereas Rabkin talks of **how** fantastic a work is, Todorov goes further and almost dismisses the possibility of a work being fantastic, it can merely have fantastic elements and this then defines if it belongs to the genre of uncanny, marvellous or any other of the genres listed by Todorov.

Like Rosemary Jackson, also Eric S. Rabkin acknowledges the fact that over a period of time perspectives change and this has its effect also on the fantastic and what is regarded as fantastic. Furthermore, the fantastic is tightly linked to reality and as Kenneth Burke (as reported by Rabkin 1976:154) said as early as in 1935; "reality is a matter not so much of how things are as how we think they are; not of what things do but of what we expect them to do; not of actuality but of conception." A fantastic world has always been created in the reality of the writer in question and this reality is reflected on the work of the fantastic.

Like Todorov, Rabkin does not concentrate on the psychoanalytical point of view on the fantastic, but, he (Rabkin 1976:194) makes an important comparison between the fantastic and madness. Rabkin refers to Jung, who talks about the compensatory function of dreams and neuroses, which shows how madness is seen as a flight from reality. Rabkin calls madness an interior escape and fantasies function similarly as escapes from reality.

Rabkin makes a difference between fantasy, the genre, and fantastic, the affect. The fantastic affect is the diametric and fundamental reversal of the ground rules of the world in question, this phenomenon can happen in the world of science, poetry, politics, theology... "All that glitters is not gold", neither are all narratives with fantastic elements fantasy. However, "the fantastic is a special quality that we have seen as the defining quality in the genre of Fantasy" (Rabkin 1976:189). According to Rabkin, the scope of fantastic is very wide, it is a genre not only in narrative but also in drama, poetry, painting, music and film. Furthermore, fantasy has a broad appeal to people of all ages.

Rabkin (1976:215) makes a similar claim to that of Jackson: "All art, all mental wholes, are, to some extent at least, fantastic." Furthermore, on the scale of the continuum of fantastic there are minimally fantastic works, according to Rabkin (1976:215) for example Henry James's *The Ambassadors*, but it is still somewhat fantastic because it is a work of art. Reality is the polar opposite to the fantastic, however, "the wonderful, exhilarating, therapeutic value of Fantasy is that it makes one recognize that beliefs, even beliefs about Reality, are arbitrary" (Rabkin 1986:218). Therefore, reality is not merely what we think it is. On the contrary, we are not bounded by reality, fantasy makes that possible: "man travels in fantastic worlds " (Rabkin 1976:227). However, according to Rabkin (1976:226-227), to function as an escape from reality is not fantasy's only purpose, even though it is an important one, but "the fantastic reveals not only our deepest fears, but also our greatest aspirations; not only our hidden shames, but also our finest hopes."

## 2.5 Consensus and a Slight Divergency of Opinion

As has been shown on the preceding pages, fantasy as a literary genre is a controversial issue, the terms 'fantasy' and 'the fantastic' are open to several different interpretations, as David Pringle (1988:13) says. Webster's dictionary defines fantasy in the following manner: "a creation of the imaginative faculty, imaginative fiction featuring especially strange settings and grotesque characters - called also fantasy fiction." Different studies by differents scholars come up with different definitions and categories of the fantastic. Christine Brooke-Rose (1981:71) critisizes Todorov's definition of the pure fantastic as a mere theoretical model in a given set of historical texts, although the fantastic is written and read all around the world, whether it is called a genre, a mode or by some other name. Perhaps we need these pure types to "exist as representatives of abstract models" (Brooke-Rose, 1981:66). As Slusser et al. (1982:ix) state, "the difficulties in defining fantasy as a genre arise in large part from problems in defining the real".

There is divergence of opinion of whether the fantastic is an autonomous genre at all. However, no-one doubts the existence of the fantastic and its wide scope; it is also agreed that not everything that contains fantastic elements belongs to fantasy. Most scholars - Rosemary Jackson and Eric S. Rabkin belong to these - on this field do not share Tzvetan Todorov's claim that the fantastic does not

exist anymore but has undergone a transformation, which also Marta E. Sánchez (in Slusser et al. 1982:38) emphasizes.

Looking at the extensive studies of the fantastic by Todorov, Jackson and Rabkin, one notices that, even though there is difference of opinion at times, they also have a great deal in common and on several points it is merely a question of different shade of meaning, or simply a case of using a slighty different term. The greatest difference in my opinion can be found in how these writers emphasize certain questions and what their starting point is in studying the fantastic.

For Todorov hesitation is the most characteristic feature of the fantastic and it is what creates the fantastic element. For Rosemary Jackson - who also acknowledges the fact that hesitation plays an important role in the fantastic - the starting point is the tight connection of fantasy with reality and its social context. Also for Rabkin the basis for study is reality, the groundrules of reality and/or of the narration and, moreover, the psychological affect that breaking these groundrules creates. Therefore, the close liaison between reality and fantasy is something that is agreed on. The reason for this can be found perhaps in David Clayton's (Slusser et al. 1982:66) claim that the fantastic seems more disturbing against a convincing realistic facade.

Todorov and Rabkin both list similar requirements or signals of the fantastic, i.e. the astonishment or hesitation experienced by characters and/or the narrator.

However, Rabkin leaves out the hesitation experienced by the reader, a point which Todorov stresses.

All the three writers discuss the functions of the fantastic and are quite unanimous about them. All agree that the fantastic has at least a two-fold function: a literary one and a social one, i.e. the fantastic functions within the narration creating suspense, building up the fantastic world and so on. With its social function the fantastic allows "forbidden" topics to be dealt with, for example sexuality and its different manifestations. More than the other two, Jackson also treats the psychological side of the fantastic, but, all three agree on the fact that the fantastic is used in revealing the dark side of man. Ruth Parkin-Γουνελα (2000) goes even further on this point and emphasizes how the fantastic is used to release the dark side and desires of man and allowing the return to social order in the end. People tend to repress the past, childhood traumas for example, and the repression has a disruptive effect and, more importantly, the repressed always returns. Fantasy is a safe medium to let out the repressed past.

Unlike Todorov and Jackson, Rabkin does not divide fantastic into genres, subgenres or modes, nor does he talk about the themes of the fantastic. Todorov and Jackson do, and as regards to themes, they are fairly unanimous. Moreover, their division of the themes into those of the self and those of the other are very much alike. Like Jackson, also Todorov discusses sexuality extensively but, for Jackson, desire - expressing it or expelling it - is of great

importance in fantasy, one of its main functions in fact. The themes of fantastic are very extensive and, as John Gerlach (Slusser et al. 1982:121) says, the fact that fantasy is not tied closely to any individual theme, enables its creation in any age.

A point that Eric S. Rabkin discusses extensively - and the other two ignore completely - is how fantasy functions as an escape from reality, or boredom of the mind. As mentioned above, all escape literature has fantastic elements, but not all escape literature is fantasy literature. This leads to the aspect that especially Jackson and Rabkin emphasize: fantastic elements can be found in everything in life and especially in all art forms, because they are a product of imaginary activity and all imaginary activity is fantastic.

Nevertheless, it is rather an inconvenient definition of the fantastic to say that all literature is fantastic, and therefore it is necessary to narrow it down somewhat. However, finding the answer to the question of what fantasy literature is, is not an easy task. Todorov and Jackson make divisions into different genres and modes, using slightly different terminology. Rabkin has chosen another path, he describes fantasy as a continuum: a piece of writing can be fantastic to a greater or lesser extent according to the affect and the amount of fantastic elements it has. After looking into the above-mentioned studies it is still impossible to form one, clear-cut definition or theory of fantasy literature. Rather, if a piece of work has a certain accumulation of the above-mentioned features,

characteristics and themes, then it can be determined whether it really belongs to the genre of fantasy literature.

Defining the fantastic is not an easy task and therefore deciding if a piece of writing belongs to the genre of fantasy literature is not easy either. In the Analysis chapter of my study I will be looking at *The Magus* in detail against the theoretical framework I have constructed above and will then try to find out about the fantastic elements it has. At this stage of my study I am already convinced that *The Magus* belongs to the genre of fantasy literature, and I do not base this claim merely on the broadest possible definition, i.e. that all literature, every product of imaginary activity is fantastic. *The Magus* has clearly fantastic elements and I intend to have a closer look at them and then try to place it within the continuum of fantasy literature (cf. Rabkin) or under one of the sub-genres of the fantastic. Moreover, by first looking at the history of fantasy literature I intend to obtain a broader view of this genre and see how it has changed over the centuries.

### 2.6 History of Fantasy Literature

The fantastic as a literary genre is as old as literature itself and even older than the novel form. Fear and desire are close to each other and they are also an essential part of the fantastic and as Delbert D. Phillips (1982:3) says, fear is one of our strongest emotions - the "apprehension of the unknown and of death" - and this preoccupation has stayed with us from antiquity. In Petronius's

and Apulius's works we already find fantastic elements, werewolves for example. Furthermore, it has always been an universal phenomenon; the old Icelandic *Edda* and the *Nibelungenlied* of the German world both belong to the genre and also the Finnish Kalevala can definitely be counted in the fantasy literature. Later on fantasy has been especially prolific in Latin America and Russia. Among the major fantastic works of Europe also *Beowulf* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* must be mentioned. The "golden age" of the fantastic started at the beginning of the seventeenth century: "The body of the supernatural literature grew throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and gave rise to the birth of the Gothic school of horrific and fantastic prose" (Phillips 1982:3). Goethe's *Faust* is one of the classics of gothic literature. Sometimes gothic is regarded as a subgenre of the fantastic, some scholars use the term 'gothic' almost as a synonym for the fantastic, as does Ruth Parkin-Γουνελα (2000). Both Phillips (1982:3) and Jack G. Voller (1987:vi) consider Horace Walpole with his *Castle of Otranto* (published in 1764) the founder of the supernatural as a permanent fictional form. On the other hand, Brian Aldiss (in the foreword of David Pringle's *Fantasy: The Hundred Best Novels*, 1988:1) calls Cervantes's *Don Quijote* "the great precursor of the novel form" but he also agrees that fantasy is older than the novel.

According to David Pringle (1988:14), up to the eighteenth century almost all narrative fiction was fantastic. He goes on saying that the apparition of the realistic novel in the first half of the eighteenth century had a revolunationary

impact on English writing and that it became the dominant form of modern literature. However, the fantasy continued to exist on the side and culminated in the first significant sub-genre, the 'gothic' beginning in late eighteenth century. The works of such writers as Clara Reeve, William Beckford, Anne Radcliffe, M. G. Lewis, Mary Shelley and the above-mentioned Horace Walpole can be considered the classics of the gothic movement.

The gothic tale was very popular among the reading public but by the end of the nineteenth century the realistic novel became the leading form of fiction, as stated by David Pringle (1988:15). Fantasy never quite died out but it was mainly present in sub-categories of the novel proper, such as fiction for children, sensational novels, and so on. New sub-genres kept emerging: the historical novel, the romantic love story, the crime thriller, the imperial tale of adventure. In these the fantastic element was in minimum. However, fantasy started to make a return. Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which was published in 1897, is a good example of novels of that time. The English ghost story flourished and also the scientific romance of H. G. Wells and the like. After the turn of the century, fantasy had re-established itself as a major literary genre and writers such as Lord Dunsany, E. R. Eddison, David Lindsay and H. P. Lovecraft are representatives of the "modern fantasy". From the scientific romance developed the modern sub-genre of fantasy, science fiction. Jackson (1981:4) points out that modern fantasy "is rooted in ancient myth, mysticism, folklore, fairy tale and romance" and that, since the late eighteenth century when industrialization

transformed western society, "the debilitating psychological effect of inhabiting a materalistic culture" can be seen also in the fantasy literature.

As we have seen, fantasy literature is still alive and well in our days and perhaps it is even going through its second "golden age". David Pringle (1988:13-16) has noted that fantasy has become over the past few decades "a highly visible category of prose fiction", and even though is is an ancient fictional form, as a commercial genre it is one of the youngest. Moreover, considering the fantasy in the English speaking world, it seems to be more prolific nowadays in America than in England. Two of the 'booms' of fantasy literature during the twentieth century, as David Pringle (1988:17) calls them, occurred in the mid to late 1960s and in the early 1980s, and the emphasis continues to be in America. As some of the "milestones" of the modern fantastic could be mentioned Robert E. Howard's *Conan* books, Ira Levin's *Rosemary's Baby*, Michael Moorcock's work, Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Peter Beagle's *The Last Unicorn* and Stephen King's novels, which also have achieved great commercial success.

Inspite of the strong American influence in modern fantasy literature, it has and it is been written all over the world. John Fowles' *The Magus* was written on the other side of the Atlantic and in 1950s, before the first boom of the 1960s.

## 3 JOHN FOWLES AND *THE* MAGUS - THE PRESENT STUDY

The novels of John Fowles can not be called autobiographical but naturally his life experiences have left their mark on his work. In Barry N. Olshen's (1978:6) words: "Both Fowles's thought and his writing bear witness to his cosmopolitanism." This is certainly true when considering *The Magus* and therefore I think it is only appropriate to have a more detailed look at his life and especially his experiences abroad.

John Fowles was born on 31st of March, 1926, in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex. He spent his early childhood in Essex but during World War II the family was evacuated to a small village in Devonshire. Here, for the first time, he came into contact with the mysteries of nature and this influenced him deeply. At school he specialized in French and German. John Fowles continued his studies in the university, first at the University of Edinburgh and later on he studied - again French and German - at New College, Oxford. In between he served as a lieutenant in the Royal Marines. During his studies he became acquainted with the works of post-war existentialists, which has had a lasting influence on him. He especially admired Sartre, Camus and Flaubert.

Fowles started his working life as a reader in English at the University of Poitiers in France. He mentions France as one of the three countries where he has his roots - the first one being naturally England - and Greece being the third. He has indeed said that more than British, he feels European. Greece became

part of his life in 1951 - 1952 when he was working as an English master at the Anargyrios School on a Greek island called Spetsai. The time was significant for him in many ways. Barry N. Olshen (1978:6) calls the Anargyrios School "the prototype of the island school in *The Magus*"; the setting is strikingly similar and he did start writing the book soon after leaving Greece. During this time he also wrote poetry, including many of his *Greek Poems*. Moreover, on Spetsai he met his future wife, Elisabeth Whitton, whom he married in 1954. Therefore, the three above-mentioned countries have a special meaning for John Fowles: England as the country where he was born and where he lives, France more than anything else because of its literature and Greece as a place where "one must confront the basic existential questions" (Olshen, 1978:6). This special feeling can be sensed in *The Magus*. It is a book written by someone who has clearly been touched by the unique atmosphere of Greece.

After returning to England he continued with teaching until 1964 and since then he has devoted his time solely to writing. He came into fame with his novel *The Collector* in 1963, which was his first published title. His works also include *The Aristos* (1964), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), *The Ebony Tower* (1974), *Daniel Martin* (1977), *Mantissa* (1982) and *A Maggot* (1986). Eventhough *The Magus* was first published in 1966, it can be considered John Fowles's first novel, he himself certainly does so. He began writing it in the early 1950s, but due to his insecurities about himself as a writer and not being content with his work, he postponed its publication. His dissatisfaction led him so far that he wrote a revised version of the book, which came out in 1977 (I

will be using this version of *The Magus*) and although there are no major thematic or narrative changes, it is, in his own words "rather more than a stylistic revision."

John Fowles is famous for unusual decisions, which the revision of *The Magus* certainly is; for example *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has two alternative endings. However, *The Magus* has a special place for Fowles among his work. In an interview with Raman K. Singh (1980-1:186) he said that "I like the worst best.", referring to *The Magus*. Furthermore, he considers that *The Magus* is the book where he taught himself to write (Singh, 1980-1:187). He is clearly happier with the second version; in an interview with Carol Barnum (1985:194) he has said about it that "the second version is the one I want to see reprinted." According to Robert Huffaker (1980:45), the revisions prove Fowles's genius and that the "revisions show restraint: he has clarified the novel without eroding the mystery."

Eventhough John Fowles does not like the "academic mania for influencetracing" (Barnum, 1985:198), *The Magus* has its sources of influence and he himself acknowledges them as well. First of all, according to his own words, writing it was "an attempt at something along the lines of Henry James's masterpiece, *The Turn of the Screw*", a classical fantasy novel. However, the most conscious model was Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, a kind of 'passage-de-rite' or 'bildungsroman'. Richard Jefferies's *Bevis* was another

great influence and also Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Additionally, theories of Carl Jung have influenced Fowles deeply.

In *The Magus* the protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, is running away from responsibilities and love and goes to the remote Greek island of Phraxos to work as an English master. There he leads a lonely life and contemplates his life so far, and even attempts suicide. After a while he meets a peculiar man, Conchis, who takes him into a world of his own, telling Nicholas about his experiences and claiming to be a "traveller in other worlds". Strange events start to take place and Nicholas is drawn to the masque or the godgame arranged by Conchis ("godgame" was the title Fowles first intended for the book), where he no longer knows what is real and what is fantasy, he has "entered a myth". The ending is faithful to Fowles's style, as it is somewhat ambiguous and obscure, and only one thing is certain: Nicholas has changed.

The aim of the present study is to look at one novel - *The Magus* by John Fowles - in terms of fantasy literature. It can be said without a detailed study that *The Magus* is, at least to some extent, fantasy. It is regarded a fantasy novel by scholars in the field, David Pringle for example, therefore it is rather a question of degree, of how fantastic *The Magus* is. In other words the purpose of this study is to find out about the fantastic features in *The Magus*. This will be done by applying the theories that were discussed earlier on to the novel in hand. Of course one cannot expect to find all the possible fantastic features in

*The Magus*, but depending on their amount one can come to a conclusion about whether *The Magus* is fantastic and to what extent.

## 4 THE FANTASTIC IN *THE MAGUS* - THE ANALYSIS

John Fowles began writing *The Magus* in the 1950s, therefore it can be said to be a modern novel. As was shown above, defining fantasy is a difficult task and it is not always easy to say if a piece of writing is fantasy or not. Moreover, fantasy is often connected to the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and not to the literature of our twentieth century, when *The Magus* was written. However, *The Magus* has elements that are clearly fantastic and its basic storyline follows the pattern of the classical fantasies starting from the *Odysseya*, where the hero finds his heroism, and himself, after several adversities and temptations. David Pringle (1988) lists *The Magus* in his book of modern fantasy, *Fantasy: The Hundred Best Novels,* and calls it "a fable of the extraordinary, and very much a book about magic and illusion" (Pringle 1988:89).

### 4.1 *The Magus*

#### 4.1.1 Still in Touch with Reality

*The Magus* is a long novel, over 600 pages, and is divided into three parts, each of which begins with a quotation in French from Marquis de Sade. The first part of the novel is very clearly situated in the so-called real world, it takes place in

England and tells also about the beginning of Nicholas's stay in Greece. The story is told by a first person narrator, which is Nicholas. The protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, tells the story in retrospect and in the first part he tells about his childhood and his life up till the present time. He is an only child and now that his parents are dead he is very much alone in the world with only a few distant living relatives. During his university years he admired the French existentialists and tried to act like them, wanting to be different from the average student. He wrote poems and his vices included gambling and womanizing, he calls the women his "victims". Nicholas is also very cynical but says that he "was not a cynic by nature; only by revolt" (*The Magus*, p. 17).

Nicholas considers himself a poet but has to take teaching jobs to support himself and finally, while working in London he meets Alison Kelly, an Australian girl. They become lovers but Nicholas's feelings and behaviour towards her remain controversial. When he is offered a position as an English Master in Greece, he accepts it and this enables him - once again - to run away from adult responsibilities and love. Alison, who really loves Nicholas, is deeply hurt but he mainly feels relief and "a revoltingly unclouded desire to celebrate my release" (*The Magus*, p. 48).

In Greece Nicholas feels like having entered another world, as if reality were slowly slipping away, but he is still very much connected to reality and the real world. He lives and works on the small island of Phraxos where he at first leads a rather solitary life, contemplating his life, missing Alison, realizing that he is

never going to be a good poet and at one point even attempts suicide, but then he realizes that he is a hollow, unauthentic person and that he is not even capable of killing himself for the "right reasons" (i.e. depression) but it would be a mere aesthetic act.

### 4.1.2 The Mysteries Begin

The first part ends with a paragraph consisting of only one sentence: "But then the mysteries began." (*The Magus*, p. 63), and the events do take a different turn in the second part of the book. Nicholas had earlier come across a mysterious villa up on the hill at some distance away from the school and it had been empty so far. Now he finds it clearly inhabited but does not see anyone. However, while swimming on the beach near the villa, the same anthology of English poetry that Nicholas has at home has been placed on the beach with some lines from T.S. Eliot, Pound and Auden marked in it.

Nicholas is almost suprised at his own interest in the villa and its owner, Conchis (pronounced like 'conscious') and questions the people of the village about him, not finding out much. Finally he decides to pay a visit to the villa and meet its owner. When he gets there, Conchis is clearly waiting for him with afternoon tea laid out on the table for two and he even knows Nicholas's name. Nicholas's first impression is that Conchis must be mad, an old eccentric. Nevertheless he is fascinated by Conchis and decides to play along with him. He can not make Conchis out, his interpretations of Conchis range from mad to

transvestite, from homosexual to a dirty old man hiding a young mistress in the secluded villa and several others, but he is never really convinced about his own explanations: "Something more than mere loneliness, mere senile fantasies and quirks, burnt in his striking eyes" (*The Magus*, p. 88).

Nicholas gets invited again to the villa and Conchis tells him about his childhood in London, his first love Lily Montgomery, his experiences in the war and stories about eccentric people he has come across during his life, for example his rich patron de Deukans and the madly religious man, Henkrik Nygaard, whom he met while birdwatching in Norway. Especially important are the events that took place in Greece during the German invasion and the moral decision Conchis had to take as a mayor of the village, whether to kill some freedom fighters by his own hands or to sacrifice innocent villagers. Ελευθερια, 'freedom' and freedom of choice are vital elements all through these stories.

During his visits Nicholas does not only come to hear Conchis's stories, but very soon in the beginning he starts to feel an "illogical fear of the supernatural" (*The Magus*, p. 102) for some reason, and mysterious events start taking place. Nicholas hears strange music in the night, he meets a man in the village who he later realizes must have been the long dead de Deukans and, after having had a nap in the forest, he meets Robert Foulkes and a girl he had been reading about before falling asleep. He gets to see strange figures in the night: Apollo, a satyr chasing a nymph and so forth. Part of these mysterious events is meeting a

young woman, whom Conchis introduces as his first love Lily Montgomery and who is still a young girl, instead of being Conchis's age. At one point Conchis explains to him that she is in fact his goddaughter, who is a schizophrenic, and her name is really Julie. Nicholas is not sure whether to believe this or not, nevertheless he is deeply attracted to her.

While in the middle of these fantastic events Nicholas has to go and meet Alison, who now works as an airhostess, in Athens. He does not really want to but feels it is his moral obligation. They climb together to the Mount Parnassus where Nicholas tells her about Lily/Julie. They have a terrible row and Alison leaves, it could be almost said that she disappears mysteriously, and Nicholas can not get hold of her. Back on the island Nicholas enters Conchis's enchanted world again and more or less forgets about Alison without any major difficulties.

Nicholas also meets Lily/Julie's double, who turns out to be after the initial confusion her twinsister Rose/June. He believes to have won their confidence and to have a some sort of relationship with Lily/Julie. They tell him that they are actresses - like the other people he has seen - and that Conchis has hired them. Nicholas does some investigation of his own and believes their story after writing to their college and bank, amongst others, and inquiring about the girls. They give him the impression that they would like to get out of the charade and Nicholas feels like a knight in the shining armour. However, just when they are supposed to execute their plans, the girls disappear and Nicholas is attacked by

the German army that Conchis had told him about earlier on. Back at school he receives a letter from Conchis telling him that he is very disappointed with Nicholas and that it is all over. Nicholas goes back to Bourani, asks questions in the village but Conchis and his people seem to have vanished. To make things worse he gets a letter and a cutting from a newspaper telling about Alison's suicide. At this point Nicholas feels utterly "tired of deception; tired of being deceived" (*The Magus*, 400) but no matter how shocked he is, even now it is Lily/Julie, whose forgiveness would be the only justification for him, not that of Alison's.

However, after a while the godgame, as Conchis calls it, seems to get to its conclusion. Conchis invites Nicholas to the villa and tells him how during the war he invented this new kind of drama, this meta-theatre, to amuse himself, with actors and always someone who did not know the truth. Moreover, he says that Nicholas was incapable to play his part properly and that Julie and June are really, after all, Lily and Rose and Nicholas will not see them ever again and all the official letters and newspaper cuttings were forgeries. After Conchis has sailed off with his crew and when Nicholas really thinks it is all over, he meets Lily/Julie on the island, but she disappears again mysteriously. After a few days Rose/June comes to meet him and tells him that Julie will always stay faithful to Conchis but, she is in love with Nicholas, and that she, June, needs his help. Once more Nicholas feels that he is in the beginning of the mysteries. Rose/June takes him to Lily/Julie, they make love and immediately afterwards Nicholas is violently attacked by three men and he is drugged to unconsciousness. He is

kept drugged for days and finally he is taken to a trial. It has a sense of ritual, with cabbalistic emblems and the thirteen figures in the trial are all supernatural, there is Herne the Hunter, a vampire, a witch, a fish-woman-bird, Anubis and in the middle a coffin. The figures undress their costumes and turn out/pretend to be scientists, psychologists who are analyzing Nicholas who is bound in front of them. He is offered a chance to punish Lily/Julie, to whip her with a cat, he is offered the same choice as Conchis in the war, it is a question of freedom. He chooses not to whip her with the cat. After everyone has left Nicholas is offered the "final disintoxication" (*The Magus*, p. 521) and he is shown a pornographic film featuring Lily/Julie and one of the actors, a black man called Joe and after the film he is made to see their actual lovemaking in front of him. Nicholas is doubting his senses, "Had anything ever happened?" (*The Magus*, p. 530) he wonders.

Nicholas is again drugged and when he wakes up, he is somewhere on the island with a gun, some money and food, in other words he has been given the freedom to choose between killing himself and staying alive. Nicholas chooses the latter. He gets back to the school, makes a scene and is expelled. He keeps trying to find answers and thinks about Alison and how real she was, how only she could exorcize Lily/Julie. When he leaves, he continues his investigations in Athens and finds the grave of ΜΩΡΙΣ ΚΟΓΧΙΣ (Maurice Conchis), who had died in 1949. Nevertheless, the mysteries have not stopped yet, one night he gets a glimpse of Alison and realizes that she also was part of the godgame. She is the third flower on the grave of Conchis; a lily, a rose and a sweet alison,

which comes from the Greek *a* (without) and *lyssa* (madness), which implies Alison's role in the godgame, her part is to be the link with reality.

### 4.1.3 Back to Reality

In the third part of the novel Nicholas has left Greece. First he goes to Italy to meet his predecessor, John Leverrier, but he does not find out much. The grey London is a drastic change from the landscapes and colours of Greece. After a period of hectic searching for Alison, Nicholas settles down to a depressive life and carries his permanent mystery with him. He finds Lily de Seitas, who turns out to be Lily's and Rose's mother, and from her he is able to find some answers. Mostly he spends his time alone or with his landlady, Kemp, until he meets a young runaway girl from Liverpool, Jojo, with whom he has a platonic friendship. He is waiting for Alison, so to speak, and trying to fill the time before she turns up.

One day, Kemp insists on them going for a cup of tea in Regent's Park and while there, Alison simply appears, without any spectacular re-entry and Nicholas sees that she is cast as Reality. This time there is no-one watching, it is just him and her. There is no conclusion, we do not know what happens next, *The Magus* finishes with Alison and Nicholas in the park and with a Latin quotation about love: "cras amet qui numquam amavit quique amavit cras amet" (*The Magus*, p. 656), which might be translated into English as: Tomorrow let him love who has never loved; and he who has loved, let him tomorrow love.

Perhaps this means that they have the chance to love, both of them; Nicholas who has never loved and Alison who has loved.

## 4.2 The Fantastic in *The Magus*

### 4.2.1 General Features

When looking at *The Magus* in terms of fantasy literature, the first and the most obvious observation - especially when we know the ending of the book - is that it is not pure fantasy, and unlike some classical fantasy stories, it takes place in the so-called real world. However, what distinguishes *The Magus* from pure fantasy most of all, is the fact that - at least seemingly - there is a rational explanation for the events of the book. There are no magical powers causing these events to take place, on the contrary it is a charade, a godgame, meta-theatre, organized by one man, a millionaire called Maurice Conchis.

Having said all that, i.e. that *The Magus* is not pure fantasy in the sense that for example Tzevan Todorov defines it, it nevertheless has a great deal of fantastic elements and features in its storyline. First of all, it is told by a first person narrator, Nicholas. Of course, when looking at any narrative, we find that also most of them are told by first person narrators and by no means is it a dramatically fantastic feature in a book. Nevertheless, it is a common feature to most narratives in the genre of fantasy literature and this applies also to *The Magus*. This leads to a "double game", as Todorov calls it, because the story is

narrated by Nicholas and therefore the reader only has his word and interpretation of the events and one could doubt his judgement at times. However, the use of the first person narrator also facilitates the necessary identification of the reader with the characters, as Todorov points out, in this case with Nicholas.

Moreover, the character of Nicholas is somewhat similar to that of a gothic hero, he is almost like the traditional 'villain-hero', dark, handsome and moody, taking advantage of women and at least Nicholas himself likes to portrait himself as mysterious, already at university he tried to stand out from the crowd.

### 4.2.2 The Fantastic Topography

An obvious and easy starting point is to look at the fantastic features in the topography of *The Magus*. The fantastic topography was discussed above in connection with Rosemary Jackson. Just as the fantastic topography often includes a place or an enclosure that is different from the so-called real world, also *The Magus* is situated - or at least the second part of the book where the fantastic occurrences take place - is situated in a different world. Barry N. Olshen (1978:39) calls it "a world, like Wonderland, in which, it seems, anything may happen." It is "a world of people who knew no laws, not limits" (*The Magus*, 490). It is a world where incidents can be "literally out of this world" (*The Magus,* p. 213) and where Lily/Julie can refer to the Apollo figure

as her brother and add: "That is in the other world" (*The Magus,* p. 181). First of all this different world means a different country, Greece, and it is contrasted clearly with the grey England as the real world by its bright colours and magical atmosphere. Nicholas even describes his trip from England to Greece "like a journey into space" (*The Magus*, p. 49). Within Greece the small island of Phraxos is a world of its own and on Phraxos the villa of Conchis, Bourani, is its own secluded world and this is where most of the fantastic events take place. Huffaker (1980:45) points out how a Greek island as the setting of the book itself suggests mythic timelessness. Nicholas also realizes that he has come to another kind of world: "I had entered the domaine" (*The Magus,* p. 134). Moreover, later on when he feels the urge to go back, he says that he has to re-enter the domaine (*The Magus,* p. 242-243). Also Conchis himself talks about Bourani as his "small domaine" (*The Magus,* p. 312). Nicholas, Lily/Julie and Conchis often refer to Bourani, and the whole god-game, as the domaine.

Not only Phraxos, but Greece seems to be filled with "other worlds". While climbing down from the mount Parnassus, Nicholas and Alison come across a clearing with a small waterfall and the place reminds them of Eden, taking them to another world and time. Looking at Alison Nicholas also looks back in time: "Eve glimpsed again through ten thousand generations" (*The Magus*, p. 269).

Obviously the cultural differences reinforce the feeling of being in another world, and even moral values seem to be different. Moreover, Nicholas escapes to these other worlds (cf. Rabkin 1976, "fantasy as an escape"). First, Nicholas

tries to escape from love and adult responsibilities from England to Greece. Secondly, he can escape the boring life at the school and the prison of the mind created by this boredom (Rabkin, 1976:42) to the fantastic world of Bourani and all that it has to offer. It is characteristic to the "worlds" of *The Magus*, as it is to fantastic topography in general, that in the world in question the fantastic is the norm instead of being a deviation of the norm. For example, one can hear strange music in the night, come across people from history and fictional and mythical figures. Also characteristic to these other worlds is the fact that the outside world ceases to matter: "The outside world did not exist." (*The Magus*, p. 427). Moreover, at times it is not only a case of a different world but a different planet: "The wind blew through the Aleppo pines, indifferent, inhuman, on another planet." (*The Magus*, p. 459). This other world even reaches Nicholas in England, when he is talking with Mrs. de Seitas (*The Magus*, p. 604) and gets to feel its presence and how he does not "belong to this other-planet world" of Conchis and his people and their charade.

Additionally, these other worlds and the real world are used as metaphors, once with Lily/Julie, when the environment seems from another world, her body is "the only real world" (*The Magus*, p. 485), and towards the end of the book, back in London, his companion Jojo represents the real world and everything opposite to the events of Greece.

Yet another fantastic aspect is the fact that the structure of *The Magus* is patterned on that of the traditional quest story. Nicholas is like the hero of some

ancient saga, a hero who faces temptations and adversities after which he has learnt something about himself and gained the prize, in this case possibly another chance with Alison. Also Barry N. Olshen (1978:39) sees the structure as something from a traditional quest story, "involving a voyage to a distant land, the achievement of a mission or the acquisition of special knowledge, and the return home."

### 4.2.3 The Functions of the Fantastic in *The Magus*

The fantastic can have different functions in a work. First of all it can have social function, i.e. it allows the writer to deal with subjects that could not be described in realistic terms, for example homosexuality. This function was perhaps more important in the earlier decades, whereas at the time of writing *The Magus* sexuality was not such a taboo anymore and there was no need to discuss the "delicate" subjects in a veiled form. Instead, the literary functions of the fantastic are more present in *The Magus*. It certainly has a pragmatic function, the fantastic creates suspense and disturbance, keeping the reader interested. *The Magus* would be a very different kind of a novel if we knew from the beginning the natural explanation behind the fantastic events. It also has a syntactical function, i.e. the fantastic is very much part of the development of the narrative.

**Fear and horror** are crucial elements of the fantastic. Moreover, the fantastic can be used to evoke these primitive feelings, this is in fact one of the functions

of the fantastic in a piece of writing. In *The Magus* for example, soon after Nicholas has met Conchis he feels fear: "I felt, for the first time on the island, a small cold shiver of solitary-place fear." (*The Magus*, p. 89) and soon it is more than mere fear of a lonely place: "And now he frightened me. It was the kind of illogical fear of the supernatural" (*The Magus,* p. 102). It is not only fear that Nicholas feels, at times it is more, he feels "a swift stab of terror" (*The Magus,* p. 378) and "secret horror" (*The Magus,* p. 479) when seeing "a Buchenwalder horror" (*The Magus,* p. 491) or "a terrifying figure" (*The Magus,* p. 499) or "a folk-horror" (*The Magus,* p. 500) and so forth. Fear and horror are very much present in *The Magus* all through the story, but especially so during the ritual while Nicholas is bound in front of the mythical figures (*The Magus*, p. 499-500):

> The fear I felt was the same old fear; not of the appearance, but of the reason behind the appearance. It was not the mask I was afraid of, because in our century we are too inured by science fiction and too sure of science reality ever to be terrified of the supernatural again; but of what lay behind the mask. The eternal source of all fear, all horror, all real evil, man himself.

This quote also reveals the modern nature of the fantastic in *The Magus*; scientific development has taken the edge from the fear of the supernatural and revelealed the real cause of fear in modern times; the human nature and its evilness.

The fantastic is used in *The Magus* to create fear. Moreover, this function is two-fold: fantastic events at times create an atmosphere filled with fear and

horror and also on another lever, Conchis uses fantastic tricks to frighten Nicholas.

### 4.2.4 Themes of the Self and Themes of the Other

Themes of the self and themes of the other can be found in almost all fantasy literature and they belong to the major defining features of the genre. As stated above, according to Todorov (1973:106, 120), the fragility of the limit between matter and mind is characteristic of the themes of the self, and he compares the themes of the self with the world of a drug-user, a psychotic or an infant. They tell of the relation between man and the world. In similar fashion, but in other terms, Jackson (1981:58) says that the themes of the self deal with problems of consciousness, of vision and perception.

While the themes of the self deal with the consciousness, the themes of the other concern the relation between man and his desire (Todorov, 1973:139) and thereby his unconsciousness. Jackson agrees with Todorov and also emphasizes the important role of desire in connection to the fantastic and the themes of the other.

Against this framework of the themes of the self and the themes of the other, the themes of *The Magus* can be investigated. Of course the line between these two cannot always be unambiguously drawn and not all themes can be said to belong to one or the other. Nevetheless, first looking at **the themes of the self**,

in *The Magus* several themes are clearly connected to perception and vision, and transformation of time and space.

In *The Magus* it is not solely a question of visual perception, but also other senses are included, the sense of smell for example. During his second visit to Bourani, when Nicholas (*The Magus*, p. 134) wakes up during the night, he hears music and notices a strange smell. It is more like "an atrocius stench" that he recognizes from the story told by Conchis the same night, a smell that came from the rotting body of a German soldier in the shell-hole during the war. This is a fantastic event, in the so-called real world one can not, after hearing a story, smell the same things as the people who were actually there. Here also the possible transformation of time and space can be suspected: going back in time and space could be the supernatural explanation for the phenomenon. The same applies to the music and the voices Nicholas hears at the same time, the song is *It's a Long Way to Tipperary,* and it is sung by the English soldiers of World War I. It is dreamlike and dim, "almost as if it was being sung out of the stars and had had to cross all that night and space to reach me" (*The Magus*, p. 133). Moreover, even though Nicholas suspects that it is a trick played upon him by Conchis, as we saw in his remark, he - at least in the beginning - is experiencing the hesitation so characteristic to the fantastic.

Rosemary Jackson points out how chronological time is exploded in the fantastic and how time past, present and future lose their sequence. This can be found also in *The Magus*. Conchis tells Nicholas that he has "lived a great deal

in other centuries" (*The Magus,* p. 105) and that this has happened "in reality" (*The Magus,* p. 106), he then goes on to add that he also travels to other worlds. Here past and present certainly lose their sequence. Conchis is sure that he is able to travel in time, whereas Nicholas just loses the sense of time. When he wakes up after being drugged for days, outside, next to some ruins, he is not sure how long a time has passed: "And for a moment I did not know if hours had passed, or whole civilizations" (*The Magus,* p. 532). If we interpret this literally, as fantasy literature should be read, this is surely a fantastic incident: one cannot wake up after being drugged so long that whole civilizations have passed, not in the real world. This could also be a case of exaggeration, a phenomenon charasteristic to the fantastic that Todorov talks of. Instead of saying that Nicholas has been drugged for a very long time, it is implied that it has been such a long time that during it whole civilizations could have passed. Back in London Nicholas experiences a more metaphorical travel in time. He tries to find Alison but fails and when he returns to his hotel, he is "an old, old man" (*The Magus,* p. 575) and wonders how many worlds have died since he last saw Alison.

As mentioned above, the themes of the self can be connected to the world of drugs and drug-users, which are connected to other worlds, or as a way of entering these other worlds. In *The Magus* drugs and intoxication play rather a remarkable role. On more than ten occasions Nicholas is under some sort of intoxication or suspects that drugs might be the explanation for the events he has witnessed and/or experienced. In some cases it is very open and simple, as

on page 234, where Conchis tells Nicholas: "I want to intoxicate you a little... to make you receptive", on pressing him to drink 'raki', a very strong Greek alcohol. In other cases Nicholas is given some sort of drug against his will and sometimes even without his knowledge, Conchis and his people drug Nicholas for days and find out things about him under narcosis (*The Magus*, p. 514).

Furthermore, drugs and intoxication are used metaphorically. Conchis sees some of his experiences as a kind of intoxication because, when he reveals them to Nicholas, he calls it "désintoxication" (*The Magus*, p. 445), using the French word. He continues (*The Magus,* p. 516) to talk about "disintoxication" and there is also "the final disintoxication" (*The Magus,* p. 521) by shock when Nicholas is shown the live lovemaking of Lily/Julie and the black man Joe in front of his eyes. Additionally, towards the end of the book, when Nicholas starts to find out the truth, the word 'disintoxication' is used repeatedly.

Also the world of 'insanity' is connected to the themes of the self, and in *The Magus* it is a recurring motif. First of all, Nicholas actually doubts his mental stability several times in the course of the events. Secondly, Conchis tries to convince Nicholas that Lily/Julie is mad, a schizophrenic, and begins a circle of doubt and incredulity: just when Nicholas thinks that he has revealed some truth, he starts to doubt whether it could be after all mere work of a schizophrenic mind. At times the events are so confusing that it all seems like madness: "For a while I was like a man in space, whirling through madness." (*The Magus,* p. 241).

Closely connected to the world of psychological concepts is 'hypnosis'. It is mentioned on more than ten occasions and it is also used on Nicholas, at first with his consent (*The Magus,* p. 236). However, later on Nicholas, when seeking answers to the weird events, suspects that some of the people who seem to be acting out of character, might be under hypnosis and, furthermore, that he himself might have been hypnotized without his knowledge or consent.

Just as drugs and hypnotism can be ways of entering the other worlds of fantasy, so is 'sleep', which is a recurring theme in fantasy literature and is also found in *The Magus* on several occasions. On one occasion (*The Magus,* p. 141-142) Nicholas dozes off in the forest and when he wakes up, he finds himself in one of Conchis's experiments, in another world that he had been reading about before falling asleep. There is a man representing Robert Foulkes and a girl dressed in the costumes of that time appears, and finally Nicholas can not be sure whether he has been dreaming it all or not. The same applies to the whole of his experiences on the island: "I sit in the class and wonder whether this side of the island even exists. If it isn't all a dream" (*The Magus,* p. 362).

As regards to **the themes of the other**, they are not as abundant as the themes of the self. As stated above, they deal with problems generated by desire and with unconsciousness. In *The Magus* it is mainly the case of sexual desire and is connected to another fantastic feature: the excessness of this sexual desire. This is connected to the fact that the fantastic is very often about superlative states.

Already during his university years Nicholas is very much "guided" by his sexuality and womanizing is an essential part of his pattern of behaviour. His relationship with Alison starts with sex, and it continues to be a very important part of their relationship. She is very open and straightforward about her sexualiaty, sometimes even slightly crude, at least judging by the British norms of the 1950s, and Nicholas, too, has ambivalent feelings about her behaviour. In Greece Nicholas is for the first time punished, so to speak, for his excess sexual desire: he gets a venerial disease, syphilis, - or at least he thinks so - in an Athenian brothel. Later on having met Lily/Julie, he is deeply attracted to her and his feelings are also sexual in nature, even though Nicholas wants to see her as a kind of mythical virgin. Lily/Julie - and Rose/June - can be seen like the sirens of *Odysseya*, tempting Nicholas and causing more adversities on his path. Perhaps not a fantastically excessive act of sexuality, but nevertheless clearly something out of the ordinary and shocking - for Nicholas at least - is the fact that Lily/Julie is willing to be intimate with a black man, "a negro", as Joe is called in the book. This undoubtedly reflects the attitudes of the 1950s towards interracial relations in Britain.

The themes of the self and themes of the other are closely connected to psychology and especially Rosemary Jackson emphasizes the importance of **psychoanalytical perspectives** when reading fantasy literature, whereas Tzvetan Todorov is content to say only that psychology has replaced fantasy in the modern world. Moreover, John Fowles himself has admitted his debt to **Jung** as regards to *The Magus*, and in the book Conchis claims to have worked

with Jung. Especially Robert Huffaker in his study of *The Magus* underlines the importance of the Jungian analytical psychology. Huffaker (1980:58) says that particularly Jung's theories of archetypes and the collective unconscious pervade all of Fowles's work, but that this influence is at its strongest in *The Magus*. Huffaker's interpretation of the book is that it is all a meta-theater organized by Conchis, which is in reality an elaborate psychodramatic application of Jung's psychology to Nicholas's individual case (Huffaker 1980:58). For Jung, man's identity is the main target, more precisely, how the confusion between personal and collective mental processes causes problems. Nicholas, as interpreted by Huffaker (1980:59), confuses life with fiction and cannot read symbols interpretively. Conchis presents Nicholas with aesthetic, mythic and historical images from the human unconsciousness and, by doing this, he makes Nicholas go through Jung's individuation process (Huffaker 1980:60). And to make sure that Nicholas does not mistake the symbols for reality, Conchis from time to time lets Nicholas know that it all is a charade, a meta-theater.

### 4.2.5 The Fantastic Vocabulary of *The Magus*

The fantastic is not only represented in the themes and structure of *The Magus*. In my opinion John Fowles in his choice of vocabulary, especially adjectives, shows the fantastic nature of the book. To begin with, the adjective *fantastic* with its meaning of 'wonderful' and/or "odd, strange, or wild in shape, meaning..., not controlled by reason", as Longman Dictionary of Contemporary

English from the year 1978 defines it, is used, and it is illustrative of its function of emphasizing the fantastic that it is only used in the second part of the book, where the fantastic elements take place. For example on page 214 Lily/Julie describes Conchis as "the most fantastic person", later on (*The Magus,* p. 235) Nicholas calls the raki "fantastic stuff", on page 514 there is "some fantastic new development" in the events. Moreover the noun 'fantasy' is used. Conchis talks about Lily/Julie indulging her fantasies (*The Magus,* p. 223) and about accepting fantasies as real (*The Magus,* p. 477), just to give a few examples.

The adjectives 'supernatural', 'uncanny' and 'marvellous' are used in a similar fashion, and all three of them are closely connected with fantasy literature, being sub-genres of it (cf. p. 8). During one of the strange events in the middle of the night (*The Magus*, p. 183) Nicholas thinks that the "incidents began to seem quite as uncanny as truly supernatural happenings." Later on (*The Magus,* p. 387) he has "an uncanny apprehension of a reality of witchcraft", after his lovemaking to Lily/Julie, there is "an uncanny pale-violet light" (*The Magus,* p. 484) illuminating the room and he feels "a marvellous surge of euphoria" (*The Magus,* p. 487).

'Hallucinations' could be seen in relation to intoxication and drugs or insanity, and hence to the themes of the self, but in *The Magus* the word is used more as a descriptive, metaphorical concept. To cite a few examples: the strange music that Nicholas hears in the night is "hallucinatory faint" (*The Magus,* p. 133), and Lily/Julie's twinsister Rose/June "looked hallucinatorily like her sister" (*The*

*Magus,* p. 468). More importantly, towards the end Nicholas suspects whether it all was mere hallucination: "I had then a vertiginous moment in which I doubted whether it had happened. An induced hallucination? Had the trial happened? Had anything ever happened?" (*The Magus,* p. 530).

Madness is definitely one of the themes of the self, but John Fowles also uses the words 'mad' and 'madness' and their derivatives on innumerable occasions to describe the circumstances, the people or their states of mind. There are several mad or insane characters in Conchis's stories, for example Henrik Nygaard in northern Norway (*The Magus,* p. 300) and the insanely sadistic German soldier, the "psychopatic sadist" (*The Magus,* p. 426). The following are some further examples of the use of the word 'mad' and vocabulary related to madness: "insane eyes" (*The Magus,* p. 304), "insanely violent eyes" (*The Magus,* p. 321), "madwoman acts" (*The Magus,* p. 325), "insane new trick" (*The Magus,* p. 374), "manically determined (*The Magus,* p. 458), "I was mad for her" (*The Magus,* p. 460) and "I was mad with anger" (*The Magus,* p. 564). The concept of madness is also relevant in the interplay with madness and reality, as fantasy is the opposite pole to reality, so one could also draw a parallel between madness and sanity, sanity representing reality.

Also the adjective 'mysterious' is used frequently in *The Magus* to highlight the fantastic nature of the events. On page 61 a mysterious, Turkish-Islamic type melody can be heard coming from the hills behind the school. Later on Lily/Julie says that Rose/June has "always been so mysterious" about sex (*The Magus,* p.

481). Towards the end of the book, in the trial of Nicholas (*The Magus,* p. 497), there is "a mysterious, ominous smell of burning wood and acrid tar." After having met Alison at the end of the book, Nicholas thinks how he had been waiting for "some mysterious call" (*The Magus,* p. 647) instead of this simple apparition, and despite the simplicity, Alison is mysterious (*The Magus,* p.650). Additionally, many incidents are described as 'mysteries': Lily/Julie's body lays "in its mystery" (*The Magus,* p. 528) on the couch. When in England and looking back at the events in Greece, Nicholas sees them as "the active mystery" and "the permanent mystery" (*The Magus,* p. 606) and he carries his mystery (*The Magus,* p. 608) with him. Even the future seems like "another mystery" (*The Magus,* p. 645).

### 4.2.6. Fantastic Figures

The fantastic in *The Magus* is not only shown in the vocabulary. The novel is also filled with strange, **fantastic figures**: **ghosts, doubles, mythical figures**. Very early on after getting into the domaine of Bourani, Nicholas starts seeing fantastic characters. During his second visit he gets a glimpse of a mysterious figure (*The Magus*, p. 119), only the pale shape of her, consisting of flowing whiteness, a ghost-like figure. She is not the only figure Nicholas gets to see in the night. He also comes across Apollo and a satyr chasing a nymph and then a striking figure, a goddess, comes to her rescue in the night. Later on (*The Magus,* p. 199) in the forest he thinks that he sees Lily/Julie's Doppelgänger

with a black jackal, a terrifying black figure and the frail maiden. The same Anubis, the jackal-head, is also present at his trial (*The Magus,* p. 501).

Nicholas sees many people from Conchis's stories from the past, people who should be, or are, dead by now, first of all Nicholas meets a young lady whom Conchis introduces as Lily Montgomery, even though Conchis has told him earlier that Lily died in the 1920s. Therefore it must be her ghost that Nicholas meets. One day Nicholas meets, promenading in the village, de Deukans, of whose death Conchis had told Nicholas earlier. He also comes across of some the soldiers who had died in the battle. More precisely, Nicholas meets the ghosts of these people, or actors hired by Conchis to play the part. However, at this stage of the book one cannot be sure of the explanation yet. Additionally, Nicholas sees a glimpse of Alison from the window of his hotel in Athens, Since Alison had committed suicide it must be her ghost, eventhough at this point Nicholas starts to suspect foul play. At times Nicholas describes the people he meets as 'ghosts', for example (*The Magus,* p. 210) he calls Lily/Julie a ghost. When Nicholas realizes that everything might be arranged by Conchis, he confronts Lily/Julie (*The Magus,* p. 317) and says: "First you were all ghosts. Then you were schizophrenics. Now you're next week's consignment to the seraglio." Towards the end Nicholas feels that Lily/Julie will "stand as a ghost" behind every possible relationship with another woman. Ghosts come through also in a metaphorical way: there is a ghost of innocence around Lily/Julie (*The Magus,* p. 210), "a ghost of a smile" (*The Magus,* p. 449) on the face of a

Greek shepherd and also Rose/June gives him "the ghost of a sympathetic smile"(*The Magus,* p. 474).

As regards to doubles, the confusion between the twin-sisters Lily/Julie and Rose/June is an essential part of Conchis's charade. Nicholas in confused and he is convinced that he has seen Lily/Julie's double. For some reason, the black man Joe, for Nicholas, has a "doubly" anonymous face (*The Magus,* p. 321).

Statues are a recurring motif in fantasy literature (cf. Jackson 1981). Once, when Lily/Julie leads Nicholas to the forest (*The Magus*, p. 210-211), there is suddenly an expensive replica of the statue of Poseidon in the middle of trees and its location is rather suprising. Here is also a connection to the myth about Poseidon. Towards the end of the novel, during the "final intoxication" of seeing the lovemaking of Lily/Julie and Joe, she looks to Nicholas like a "magnificently lifelike wax effigy" (*The Magus,* p. 528).

Figures from *Odysseya* and other mythical figures are present in *The Magus* also through the description of the characters and metaphors: Nicholas compares Lily de Seitas to Scylla and his landlady Kemp to Charybdis (*The Magus*, p. 644). Referring to Lily/Julie, he says that he has found his Ariadne (*The Magus,* p. 210). He also compares her to a witch (*The Magus,* p. 344) and Lily/Julie herself talks about her witchcraft (*The Magus,* p. 481). Also in Nicholas's trial there is a witch, and moreover, all of his "jury" consists of mythical figures: in addition to "the traditional English witch" (*The Magus,* p.

500) there are, for example, Herme the Hunter, a man with a crocodile head, a winged vampire, an African folk-horror, a squat succubus, a pierrot-skeleton, a fish-woman-bird, Anubis the jackal head and a sacerdotal goat-figure representing satanic majesty.

The name of the book itself comes from the world of magic, the Magus is the magician, the trickster in the Tarot cards. Another reference to the Tarot is that in *The Magus* there are 78 chapters, exactly the same number as there are cards in the Tarot pack. Moreover, Nicholas calls himself 'the fool' and 'foolish', thus playing the Fool to the Magus.

As has been shown above, *The Magus* is full of mythical or fantastic figures, figures out of this world, as well as fantastic vocabulary, which all contribute to the fantastic nature of the book.

### 4.2.7 Hesitation

We come across the hesitation, so characteristic to all fantasy literature, in *The Magus* on several occasions. Hesitation is crucial also in Tzvetan Todorov's requirements for the fantastic: first of all the reader must hesitate between natural and supernatural explanations and this is what happens when reading *The Magus*, at least in the beginning. As readers we can not be sure about the nature of the explanation for the events. Of course, later on when Conchis tells about his meta-theatre, it is more likely that the reader suspects that there is a

natural explanation for also later events. However, Nicholas continues to hesitate almost until the end of the book, when he even wonders if anything really ever happened. Additionally, if and when the reader hesitates, she can identify herself with the character, Nicholas, and according to Todorov this is the second requirement for the fantastic. The third requirement, i.e. the literal reading of a text, can be linked to the hesitation: also *The Magus* must be read literally, one should not read a work of the fantastic at the same time looking for poetic or allegorical interpretations of the work at hand.

The reader might suspect a natural explanation, i.e. a very rich, old eccentric organizing this game to amuse himself but, after all, this explanation is not very natural or even plausible. Nicholas is drugged, kidnapped, physically abused. At times it could not be farther from "benign fantasy", as Peter Conradi (1982:15) calls it. In the so-called real world, any normal person would contact the police. However, Nicholas does not do that, and this diminishes the credibility of the explanation. Moreover, it would require enormous amounts of money to be able to "buy" people, as Conchis more or less does. Possibly it could be done and it might happen in the real world too, but it does leave one to hesitate. Furthermore, the fact that Alison would agree to fake her own suicide is rather a morbid idea, not to say fantastic. Even Nicholas himself wonders while watching Lily/Julie and Joe making love in front of his eyes: "I tried to imagine what could make them bring themselves to do it in front of me; what incredible argument Conchis used; what they used to themselves" (*The Magus*, p. 529). Barry N. Olshen (1978:57) offers one solution saying that, for example, there

being no explanation for Alison's joining the masque is a "gratuituous incident", a kind of mistake from John Fowles's part. Of course, this is possible, just as it is possible that it is all Conchis's doing but the fact that it would require such a "machinery" - money, people, time - is enough to make one hesitate whether to believe Nicholas or not. This is the advantage of using the first person narrator, it enables the double-game, as Tzvetan Todorov calls it. The reader only has the narrator's testimony of the events, on one hand, as a narrator he should be reliable, but on the other hand he is a character in the story and he can lie, on purpose or otherwise. In this case it is equally possible that Nicholas imagines or dreams it all, making *The Magus* a mere "trip over the inner landscape of the mind" (Olshen 1978:41), or perhaps the whole narrative is a mixture of "real" and make-believe events. At any rate, the reader has to either believe the Conchis-explanation or she is left in doubt, i.e. the hesitation stays until the end of the novel and even further on. In the case of *The Magus* we are not clearly told what the final explanation is, what the truth is, as often happens in fantasy literature. Sometimes the reader must simply believe in the fantastic, there is no natural explanation, just that the fantastic events take place in a fantastic world. In other cases there is at least a strong suspicion about the nature of the explanation. For example, in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* the reader must suspect that the narrator, Billy Pilgrim, is insane, which is the explanation for the extremely peculiar events. Also in many of Edgar Allan Poe's stories madness is the answer. For example in *The Black Cat* the protagonist-narrator's eager argumentation for his sanity proves the opposite: "Yet, mad am I not - and very surely do I not dream." (*The Black Cat*, p. 199). Thus the protagonist-

narrator also tries to convince the reader that he did not dream the events which he is about to recount. In Washington Irving's short story *Rip Van Winkle* the possible explanation is that the protagonist Rip Van Winkle fell asleep and when he thinks that he has woken up and believes that he has slept 20 years, he in fact dreams it all. With *The Magus* the reader is given one possible explanation, which is not very plausible, thus keeping the hesitation alive. One solution is to settle with the offered explanation that Conchis had arranged it all, and for example Rober Huffaker (1980:71) simply labels the incidents as something organized by a "millionaire psychiatrist" to save Nicholas. Nevertheless, the question of "why" remains.

### 4.2.8 Fantastic Cross-References

Not only has *The Magus* fantastic elements in it, John Fowles has also chosen to mention some other works and writers of fantasy in it. For example Henry James and his masterpiece of fantasy literature, *Turn of the Screw* is mentioned on two occasions, which is understandable since John Fowles himself has acknowledged its influence on *The Magus*, and moreover, 'turn of the screw' is a frequently used English idiom. Nicholas sees the Robert Foulkes incident (*The Magus,* p. 141) in the forest as something from Henry James and goes on to say that "the old man's discovered that the screw could take another turn." Later on (*The Magus,* p. 464) Nicholas feels that he can not trust Lily/Julie and Rose/June anymore because "the screw had been turned once too often for that." Towards the end (*The Magus,* p. 489) Nicholas describes the events'

course from reality to fantasy with a metaphor: "I still couldn't accept that this was not some nightmare, like some freak misbinding a book, a Lawrence novel become, at the turn of a page, one by Kafka." Additionally, Conchis compares (*The Magus,* p. 180) the protagonist of one of his stories, de Deukans, to Don Quijote, the hero of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, one of the great fantasy novels of the Hispanic world.

Apart from the vocabulary (supernatural, marvellous, uncanny), which was discussed above, subgenres of the fantastic are mentioned in other ways as well. In Athens, when Nicholas is waiting to meet Alison at the airport, the air hostesses streaming by seem like "characters from science fiction" (*The Magus,* p. 245). Fairy-tales are closely linked to the fantastic (cf. Rabkin 1976) and in *The Magus*, for example the landscape in northern Norway, of which Conchis tells to Nicholas, is like something from a fairy-tale (*The Magus,* p. 297). Lily/Julie says that in the beginning Conchis seemed like "a kind of fairy uncle" (*The Magus,* p. 336) and later on (*The Magus,* p. 458) also Nicholas refers to him as a fairy-godfather.

John Fowles is a peculiar writer in the sense that he is "confident enough to publish in a wide variety of genres" (Barry N. Olshen 1978:2) including for example *The Collector* and *Poor Koko*, which can be said to be thrillers, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* which is a historical romance, *The Enigma* which is a detective story. *The Magus*, then, could be regarded as his "exercise" in the genre of fantasy literature. In my opinion the referring to other well-known

works and/or writers of fantasy is John Fowles's way of emphasizing the fantastic nature of *The Magus*. Additionally, it is perhaps a subtle hint to the reader how to read and interpret the book.

## 5 CONCLUSION

When analyzing *The Magus* and deciding whether it is fantasy literature or not, the first and foremost fact to be borne in mind is what Rosemary Jackson has said, i.e. that all literature is a product of its time and therefore must be looked at in its historical and sociological context. *The Magus* is surely a different kind of novel than, for example, Mary Shelley´s *Frankestein* - which came out in the late eighteenth century - for obvious reasons, since it was written in a different era, which is certainly reflected in the outcome. A writer always reflects the world she lives in and the social, historical, economic, political and sexual aspects of this world. In *The Magus* this comes through most clearly in the openess with which it deals with sexuality. Fantasy is not used to talk about sexuality in a so-called veiled form, it has other functions in the novel in question, for instance creating suspense.

Another important notion to be kept in mind when concluding a study of fantasy literature is, that it is a genre which is very difficult to define. The definitions range from "all literature is fantasy" to "fantasy does not exist at all within contemporary literature". This results in two possible answers to the question whether *The Magus* is fantasy literature or not. The first one is a positive

answer: it is literature and therefore it is fantasy. The second one is a negative answer, because no fantasy has been written during our so-called modern times, at least according to Tzvetan Todorov (1973). This is hardly a satisfactory conclusion to any study and therefore it is perhaps more fruitful to resort to Eric S. Rabkin's definition of the fantastic. For him the fantastic is a continuum: simply, some works are more fantastic than others, they are situated differently on the continuum of the fantastic. What is to be borne in mind as well is that generic classifications are not always watertight, as Montgomery & al (1992:170) say, and just as the historical and sociological factors affect the writer, also "genres are...being redefined by actual practice" (Montgomery & al, 1992: 172). In other words, one-to-one comparisons can not be made between, for example, the fantasy of the 18th century and that of today.

*The Magus* is truly fantastic in the sense that it leaves the reader to hesitate even after having finished reading it. One cannot be sure of the explanation. On one hand, if one accepts the Conchis-explanation, i.e. there were no fantastic incidents, it was all the doing of one man, then at least Tzvetan Todorov would label *The Magus* as belonging to the sub-genre of the uncanny. On the other hand, calling it a representative of the uncanny makes it part of the terminological dilemmas about the fantastic. Therefore, turning again to the continuum of Rabkin seems the more convenient choice, because his definition is more flexible one compared to Todorov's fairly black-and-white notion of the fantastic. We can say that *The Magus* is fantastic because it has plenty of

fantastic features in it, even though it does **not** fullfill all the possible conditions of the fantastic.

After studying *The Magus* within the theoretical framework of the studies of Tzvetan Todorov, Rosemary Jackson and Eric S. Rabkin, I have come to the conclusion that *The Magus* is fantasy. Tzvetan Todorov would disagree, based on the fact that it was written in the 20th century and, according to him, the fantastic ceased to exist a long time ago. Nevertheless, many of the themes and requirements mentioned by Todorov can be found in *The Magus*, hesitation being perhaps the most important of these.

Rosemary Jackson does not talk of the genre of the fantastic, instead she uses the term mode and to her fantasy is a literary mode that inverts reality into something strange, something fantastic. Many of the themes of the fantastic that she mentions can also be found in *The Magus*. Furthermore, it deals with "the problem of the perception/vision/knowledge of the protagonist and the narrator" (Jackson 1981:31), which is an important point in defining the fantastic. Many of the topographical features of the fantastic are present in *The Magus*, especially that of the enclosure/another world, where the fantastic is the norm instead of being a deviation of the norm. Chronological time is exploded in *The Magus*, people travel in time, incidents from decades ago happen in the present, Nicholas loses sense of time. Sexuality is an important theme in *The Magus*, and moreover, Nicholas has to suffer from his excess sexual desire. All of these are characteristics of fantasy according to Rosemary Jackson.

For Eric S. Rabkin fantasy, more than anything, breaks the groundrules of reality, and also the groundrules of the narrative in question. In *The Magus* the groundrules of reality are certainly broken, unimaginable things happen. Also within the narrative the already established groundrules are broken again and again: just when Nicholas is able to establish some kind of an order, it is immediately disturbed with some new strange incident. *The Magus* also functions as an escape, as literature to be enjoyed and in the narrative there are several cases of escapism, as Nicholas tries to escape from several things, perhaps most of all from himself.

As a conclusion it can be said that, eventhough *The Magus* is definitely not fantasy in the strickest sense of the word, or when compared to some of the classics of the genre, it nevertheless has such an amount of fantastic features in it, that it must be "granted" the label of fantasy, especially because, as we have seen above, the fantastic as a genre is wide and borderlines are difficult to draw.

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