

Reality, Freedom and Deception: A Thematic Analysis of John Fowles's *The Magus*

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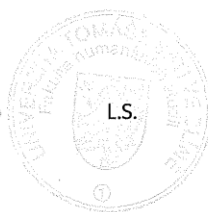
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá popisem a analýzou třech zvolených hlavních témat, které se vyskytují v díle *Mág* od spisovatele Johna Fowlese. Prvky reality, svobody a klamu jsou v práci zmíněny a rozebrány, stejně tak jako vzájemná propojenost těchto témat. Dále se práce soustředí na stručný popis postmodernismu a představení Fowlese jako postmoderního autora. Jedna z kapitol zmiňuje několik knih autora a krátce komentuje jejich obsah.

Klíčová slova: John Fowles, Mág, mág, postmodernismus, modernismus, realita, svoboda, klam.

ABSTRACT

The main focus of this bachelor's thesis is to detect and analyze three main chosen themes in John Fowle's *The Magus*. Elements of Reality, Freedom and Deception are mentioned and explained, and so are the relationships among them. This work also provides a brief introduction to the postmodernism and introduces John Fowles in the context of postmodernism. One of the chapters covers several of author's literary works and briefly comments on the content.

Keywords: John Fowles, The Magus, Magus, Postmodernism, Modernism, Reality, Freedom, Deception.

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INTRODUCTION

The origin of the word *magus* led me to choose this John Fowles' book as the subject of my bachelor thesis. In the ancient Latin, Greek and Old Persian languages, *magus* means a person, who deals with extraordinary kinds of power used to control people's minds and behaviour. Fowles' *The Magus* is an innermost example how to bring the theory to life (assumed this Fowles' literary work describes *life*, even fictional). For better understanding this Fowles' work there are certain circumstances to clarify, especially the influence of the epoch when Fowles wrote his book. In my thesis, I will describe the features of postmodernism and continuity of this Fowles' work to the precedent era of modernism. Further, there are some specific methods of Fowles' writing prefaced, as well as a view to his benefit for the postmodern literature and the way of unusual presentation of the main idea.

In the first chapter, there are some particularities of Fowles' writing explained, especially Fowles' relation to the new style of writing, which was brought by a succession of postmodernism. As a famous writer he is regarded as a successor of the American style of writing, so called *imagism* that created the basics to change and renew his ways to introduce the main idea of his *Magus*. Some essential features are stated about postmodernism to approximate the crucial signs of Fowles' style of writing. This chapter further describes the role of characters that depict the temper and the signs of that period. Another literally interesting element is the description of how the characters behave and think considering the political situation, which affects their decisions and changes their expectations.

Next chapter shortly describes some of Fowles' famous works, their names, contents and their general role in the complete enumeration of Fowles' outputs. There are some specific elements in each of Fowles' books that ostensibly do not cohere with *The Magus*, as it was Fowles' first real postmodernist work, but they surely influenced at least the base of Fowles' style.

The last part of my bachelor thesis, and concurrently the part that contains the main aims of my work, is the Analysis. The major themes delineated in this part are related to three principal themes found in *The Magus*, which are a reality, freedom, and deception. In a philosophical meaning, these concepts are used to emphasize the elementary problems that people obviously face to in their routine life. These elements are examined, so are the

relationships among them, particularly the possibility of a man how to use and explain the real meaning of the fundamental principles of life. Each of these principles is moreover stood up into a role of basic human's needs, which makes the reader think of the hidden meanings inside the story. This thesis argues that Fowles, in *The Magus*, works with themes of freedom, reality and deception with the intention to demonstrate the complicated process of human thinking, feeling and deciding, depending on the circumstances that is human surrounded by and the way he understands them.

I. THEORY

1 POSTMODERNISM IN BRITAIN

“From the modernism you choose you get the postmodernism you deserve.”¹ This chapter will be dealing with the question of postmodernism, its definition and will try to introduce to the reader how the origin of postmodernism has evolved in Britain in the 20th century. Sufficient information about postmodernism will be provided in order to gain background knowledge for the following analysis part of this bachelor’s thesis.

Although postmodernism was not formed as a consequence of the pure progress of literary critics, the literature itself is particularly considered as the fundamental field of the postmodernism. In between the 1970s and 1980s many more literary studies were published in comparison to the smaller amount of works published about architecture, film, cultural or women’s studies, which might have been the reason why the postmodernism is frequently associated with the literary realm.² First, some postmodern features must be explained for easier intellection of the following text.

Since postmodern features have begun to appear in literature and artistry in general, they happened to persist as an ever-present signification until contemporary cultural discourse. “Since its cautious beginnings in the late 1950s and early 1960s critical discussion of the so-called ‘postmodern’ movement has proliferated in practically all directions.”³ Apart from debates about postmodernism being released in Britain, also the postmodernism itself was widely spread and the sense of the concept was hard to explain.⁴

In literature, there is no precise definition of ‘postmodernism’, even though the term exists since the mid-1970s. The ‘postmodern debate’ is taking into consideration nowadays issues and discussing how those issues are connected with the former era, which is called modernism.⁵ One of the explanations of postmodernist features says: “[...] postmodernists are said to experiment with more playful and flamboyant modes of expression, freely mixing past forms and influences along with a generous dose of

¹ Tim Woods, *Beginning Postmodernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 1.

² See Steven Connor, “Postmodernism and Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism*, edited by Steven Connor (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 62.

³ Geoffrey William Lord and Kristi Jaugeri Ondarra, *Postmodernism and Notions of National Difference: A Comparison of Postmodern Fiction in Britain and America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), 9.

⁴ See Lord and Ondarra, 9.

⁵ Manmohan K. Bhatnagar, *Twentieth Century Literature in English* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 1996), 21.

self-parody.”⁶ Many critics considered postmodernism really trendy and even some experts among other activities tried to find connections and in common features between modernism and postmodernism. It has to be further detected, what do those two literary movements has in common. The similarities between those two periods of our history can be obviously seen at first sight.

According to Tim Woods, “the term postmodernism has been implicated in literary studies, particularly in relation to *fiction, poetry and drama*.”⁷ Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms provides a definition of fiction: it is a name for made up stories, and nowadays it is “usually applied to novels, short stories, novellas, romance, fables, and other narrative works in prose, even though most plays and narrative poems are also fictional.”⁸ Those are some of the typical type of literature, which was mainly written in the period of postmodernism.

With the link to the poetry, Neil Corconan described the era of the postmodernism and British poets, who can be separated into the two groups. One of the groups is connected with a “branding, dilution (under the guise of accessibility) and commodification of intellectual and creative activity”⁹ which are the vital features for this period of time and the second group have the features connected with another branch of art, such as architecture.¹⁰ This paragraph takes into consideration features of British poets while poetry was one of the types of literature in postmodernism.

Another typical type of literature in the postmodern era was novel. The novel is almost every time longer “fictional prose narrative”¹¹ and its characteristic is, that some of the novels can be “very short, some are non-fictional, some have been written in verse, and some do not even tell a story.”¹²

⁶ Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. *The Post-war British Literature Handbook* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 10.

⁷ See Woods, 49.

⁸ Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127.

⁹ See Redell Olsen, “Postmodern Poetry in Britain” in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century English Poetry* edited by Neil Corconan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 42.

¹⁰ Ibid, 42.

¹¹ See Baldick, 234.

¹² Ibid, 234.

Fredric Jameson described the postmodern features with words, that it is the range of features “from obscurity and sexually explicit material to psychological squalor and overt expressions of social and political defiance”¹³ He also marked as a postmodern features: “nostalgia, the death of individuality, the perpetual present, and the recycling of the past”.¹⁴ Postmodernism has many attributes, and some of them are similar to modernism.

Today the term ‘postmodernism’ is frequently used and had become to occur in every sphere of everyday life when it comes to culture and media. The original roots of postmodernism seem to be entirely indistinct and doubtful, and maybe it is not a coincidence that postmodernism does not allow the origins to be known. Postmodernism has adopted an unsteady semantic meaning, which covers and reflects its symbols of indecisiveness and uneasiness. The constitution of “its relativistic cultural politics as a new orthodoxy”¹⁵ together with the perplexity of realizing all the intelligent utterance and terminology, represents that there is force function for discursive double meaning and transferred point of view (meant by this sentence, for instance usage in a different field with absolutely dissimilar associations and mentioning points).¹⁶

The contemporary cultural period, which was as well a historical period, now carries the coinage of postmodern era. The term ‘postmodernism’ has a number of meanings at the same time. The explanations considering the today’s literary works is plain and easy: On one hand there are “traditional orthodox cultural centers in England (Oxbridge & Bloomsbury)”¹⁷ and they did not continue in holding back the influence and shortly after that many sub-centres appeared as soon as the education was extended to the public. And furthermore, there was an important impact from all over the world when people brought their vital ideas and opinions. This fact was an encouragement for the

¹³ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 4.

¹⁴ Fran Mason, *The A to Z of Postmodernist Literature and Theatre* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 263.

¹⁵ See Woods, 3.

¹⁶ See Woods, 3.

¹⁷ See Bhatnagar, 14.

British nation with an Anglo-American tradition.¹⁸ In that period, the wave of people moving to different country brought new ideas and knowledge, which also influenced postmodernism.

Despite the fact, that London before even entered the World war II., was considered as narrow-minded and prudish, it carefully acts both as sensitively numinous innovation and as the main point in spreading the art to the world, which was made seem as characteristically ‘modern’ and groundbreaking.¹⁹ One of the features of postmodernism is the fact, that this era was influenced by TV and cinema. And another type of literature was postmodern drama. One of the protagonists of drama would be Samuel Beckett, who had a great success in London with his *Waiting for Godot*.²⁰ Which is one of Beckett’s best known works.

Postmodernism in literature is mostly dealing with narrative fiction. One of many theories about the origin of postmodernism, which had been evolved from modernism, says that there is an advance in the form of writing, which is noticeable especially during the period of conversion from modernism into postmodernism. The most remarkable difference can be seen in the move from poetry to fiction. In order to explain preceding form of fiction – the poetry, it need to be said that the aim of the postmodernist poem, either in the form of precedent short imagist poem or driving works with undertones, was to shorten the comprehension of the time and history in order to catch both attributes in the easy picture.²¹ Another issue that shaped the era of postmodernism will be described in the following paragraph.

With an arrival of television in the late 1930s in Britain, another level of home enjoyment was at disposal for those, who were able to pay for it. After all, television decreased the popularity of cinema, as well as the number of people coming to the cinema, which was until then the most favorite entertainment.²² But often observed and growing phenomenon was the difference between the prime intention of the author’s text and the

¹⁸ See Bhatnagar, 14.

¹⁹ Andrew Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 515.

²⁰ See Sanders, 597.

²¹ See Connor, 62.

²² See Sanders, 518.

resultant form that was submitted to the audience, which leads to a discrepancy of consumer's feelings. So there is an advantage found in readers' freedom how to explain the meaning of the original text (the book). The cultural program given by the cinema and by the fact that director had wider sphere of action with fewer restrictions for the text itself, provides mention about the consciousness with the growing tendency of the unstable relationship in the 20th century in Britain between "the viewer and the viewed object, the reader and the text, the past and the present".²³ The hassle about the form of writing influenced the early Modernists. There have been several debates about what is given and traditional and the rejection of that given and traditional. Those debates were about the way, how the past is described in the writings and what impact does the past have on the writings. Those steps lead to postmodernism being the consequence of modernism.²⁴ One of the features of postmodernism is the fact, that this era was influenced by TV and cinema.

Modernism refers to the first half of the 20th century and the term postmodernism is rather used while talking about the approach and the numerous works created after the Second World War. Postmodernism combines both old style of writing and the new components in literature. In the period of time, when *Beowulf* was written, it was usual to display the main protagonist as a hero. But that is not the case of postmodernism anymore – main characters have different qualities. Instead of heroes, there is the protagonist, who decides about his life and makes his own decisions, yet is helpless when the superior force strikes. This case is one of the primary topics of postmodernism.²⁵ The strategy of using this kind of the main character in writing also evoked that there has been written a very large number of books in British literature.

This paragraph takes into consideration the female and male reformulations of the fiction in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain. The widening of women's point of view and facilities for realizing their ideas became a consequential example of the changes in social life in the 1960s. After the end of the Second World War, several changes had been made

²³ See Sanders, 519.

²⁴ See Sanders, 519.

²⁵ Roland Carter and John McRae, *The Routledge History of Literature in English: Britain and Ireland* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 413.

in understanding the “gender, sexuality, and marriage”²⁶ because of both the New Morality and the new attitude when it comes to women’s employment, or more precisely women’s employment on the professional level. Germaine Greer wrote *The Female Eunuch*, (1970), which was, later on, available in twelve different languages. The book contained an impulse of the progress of the feminism, which was a rare and unwonted topic at that time and often considered as an irritating issue. The author thinks that the group of noble suffragettes started the ‘first feminist wave’²⁷ A large number of women’s writing became an integral part of the literature at that time and helped to shape this literary era, so it is consequential to mention this topic.

With a connection to the women in literature, in 1867, John Stuart Mill came up with “a motion for woman suffrage into British parliament.”²⁸ Despite the fact that the motion was not successful, John Fowles point out to the date of 30 March 1867 and according to James Acheson, Fowles said about the date, that it is a time “from which we can date the beginning of feminine emancipation in England.”²⁹ During the interview with Dianne L. Vipond, Fowles answered to the question about women’s liberation movement with words: “I’m totally for the feminine principle, as I hope all my novels prove.”³⁰ This answer shows what importance women’s literature represents for Fowles.

All facts mentioned in this chapter were important during the process of shaping this literary trend – postmodernism. They also caused the variety of the contemporary literature being a mixture of “old and new, English and non-English, standard and non-standard, male and female, public and private, universal and individual, certain and uncertain”³¹ in the journey to formulate the world around us.

²⁶ See Sanders, 621.

²⁷ See Sanders, 621.

²⁸ See Eileen Warburton, “Accidental Feminist: The French Lieutenant’s Woman in 1969” in *John Fowles* edited by Acheson (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), Chapter 7.

²⁹ See Acheson, Chapter 7.

³⁰ See Vipond, 89.

³¹ See Carter and McRae, 414.

2 JOHN FOWLES IN THE CONTEXT OF BRITISH POSTMODERNISM

John Fowles is said to be a great novelist with big success in selling his books. He earned credits from academic critics. Fowles deeply admired writer Daniel Defoe and he used same techniques in his writing such as enormous narrative power and the ability to force the reader to pay the attention throughout the whole book. Fowles usually mystifies readers in his fiction, where he offers many possible endings.³² *The Magus* could be an example of the book, where the reader can decide about the ending of the book while Fowles left the end opened.

There was a new trend in British literary in the period of 1950s, which was called The Movement and its founders were “Kingsley Amis, Philip Larkin and John Wain in Oxford”.³³ John Fowles did not want to be part of the group “the Movement” which was the shaping and leading group in English literature in the period after the Second World War, so he distanced himself from it and tried to bring some new and innovative strategies while keeping the same type and forms of telling the story and natural apprehension of realism. John Fowles can be labeled as a “non-postmodern postmodernist writer”³⁴ in a way that his simplicity of notion connected to the postmodernism, “such as metafiction, self-reflexive games, and self-consciousness”³⁵ is joined with existential fears and ideas of human beings and creativeness, which are related to the Romanticism. Fowles proved his dissimilarity from the others by writing his first novel – *The Collector*.³⁶

In order to make it easily for reader understand the term metafiction, we can see the definition in the book *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, which says: “Metafiction is fiction about fiction; or more especially a kind of fiction that openly comments on its own fictional status”.³⁷ In other words, by the terminology metafiction, we can express if

³² David Scott Kastan, *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 352.

³³ See Susana Onega, “The Aristos and Wormholes: John Fowles’s Theory of Being and Art” in *John Fowles* edited by Acheson (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2013), Chapter 1.

³⁴ See Mason, 117

³⁵ See Mason, 117.

³⁶ See Mason, 117.

³⁷ See Baldick, 203.

the novel is about some novelist, who has a hard time writing his own novel and at the same time he analyzes the structure of fiction. On the other hand, the term metafiction is regularly applied for writings, which contain “a significant degree of self-consciousness about themselves as fiction” in the methods that consider more than only casual excusatory discourse to the reader.³⁸ This was the explanation of the term Metafiction.

With a connection to the women’s writing mentioned in the previous chapter, this issue of women’s literature affected Fowles’ own writing. “In many ways, Fowles’ novel proclaims sympathy with what became the women’s emancipation movement later in the nineteenth century as it grew synchronously with other progressive movements towards individual freedom in politics, science and the arts.”³⁹ This aspect was also shaping his writing.

Fowles’ novels are written in a sophisticated way, he often uses methods of magic, delusion, and deception. He plays with the topic and style of presentation of the story line. Fowles gained recognition in Europe and the USA for his writing, which is characterized by a high level of intellectuality, generally complicated and well built main idea. He advised the audience about the complexion of the adventure during the reading. To demonstrate it on the example: *The French Lieutenant’s woman* is written in the Victorian novel form and there is reader’s obligation to choose from two different and potential endings. The general public and critics may consider this postmodernist novel as a frontier because it uses traditional form, or enjoyable for its good story or commanding yet asking questions.⁴⁰ Fowles uses for example themes of magic, sexuality, seductiveness and allusion, which are features of postmodernism in order to impress the reader.

According to Salami, the fiction that wrote Fowles “deals with different literary modes and polemical styles ranging from realism, modernism, and postmodernism, [so] a review of these narrative forms seems indispensable.”⁴¹ Fowles uses illusion in delivering the truth with the intention to amaze the audience and make an impression on them. Another characteristic of his writing is that in his novels “there is no closure of

³⁸ See Baldick, 203.

³⁹ See Acheson, Chapter 7.

⁴⁰ See Carter and McRae, 478.

⁴¹ See Salami, 18.

discourses”.⁴² This phenomenon of leaving the ending opened can be seen in many of his books, concretely *The Magus* would be a suitable example because there is a big space for reader’s imagination for the ending of the story. This is one of the features that connect him with the postmodernism.

In 1968, Fowles fought for the restoration of the form of the novel and his aim was to preserve its understandability and old humanistic values of realism. In a way, he represents the desire to reunite the “solace of form; with desire for the restoration of traditional enjoyment of narration”.⁴³ This is exactly the pattern, which Linda Hutcheon considers as a defining feature of postmodern fiction.

According to Hutcheon, what Fowles does in his *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* and what features he uses, this work can be labeled as historiographical metafiction - by this term she means the well-known and famous fiction that is strongly self-reflexive but on the other hand, refer to the events and characters from the past. We are talking about the type of novel, where the “theoretical self-awareness of the history and fiction”⁴⁴ such as human creation (historiographical metafiction) becomes the base for its rethinking and remodeling of forms and contents of the past, which always works within the bounds of convention.⁴⁵

In his writing, John Fowles uses time as a matter of big impression, combines the current time with historical occasions from the past of the world’s history or in the character’s history. In his writing, he widely relies on reader’s sense of fantasy and his/her creativity. He said to be really good or even better than other writers at making and providing vital ideas and arguments. While reading his works, it can be at once annoying and impressive.⁴⁶ But eventually, both cases make an impression on readers.

John Fowles is an author, who uses certain narrative techniques and elements in order to disorganize modernist procedures, but on the other hand, he is an author, who respects traditions. The view of the critical realism and the knowledge of historical facts are not unfamiliar to him as well as the tendency to make certain details more

⁴² See Salami, 19.

⁴³ Hans Bertens, and Joseph Natoli, *Encyklopedie postmodernismu* (Barrister&Principal, 2005), 133.

⁴⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 5.

⁴⁵ See Hutcheon, 5.

⁴⁶ See Carter and McRae, 478.

psychological. It can be said, that the domain of his literary creation is not realism, but “interpretationalism”.⁴⁷ According to Salami, there can be found paradoxical situations in Fowles’ writing that are signs of the postmodernist style of writing a fiction.⁴⁸

This chapter will provide several authors’ approaches to Fowles’ writing. As Bystřický stated, Fowles thought that there must be a closer look at the understanding the rules of the text, and in case the rules are not followed it is necessary to keep an eye on what is happening in the “reality” with regard to the constructive patterns of reality, to the need for examination of its false claims on general acceptance, and to being different in arts. Fowles’ usages of seductive connection where characters are too adherent or dependent on the system of “auto references” also determine one of the methods, how can meta-langue be used in the novel.⁴⁹ Seductive connections between characters in Fowles’ books are apparent because he often used the theme of sexuality in his writing.

When it comes to John Fowles novels, it looks like a lot of troubles of narrative style appear to begin from incapability to decide how to represent the structure, which is complicated and figurative. Usually, it is not easy with the determination of “identity of the narrative voices”⁵⁰ because Fowles used to combine several voices and tenses with the events from the past and fiction within one discourse, and also allows possible endings in some of his books. His fiction is as a matter of fact “an embodiment of freedom, of individuality, and of existentialism”.⁵¹ There is a special kind of relationship among the writer, narrator and the person who reads the book and with regards to the text it brings up constant asking question during the reading his books. This style of narration is one of the typical methods he used to concretize essential topics.⁵² This style of writing is typical for Fowles because it can be recognized in many of his books and makes him a postmodern writer.

⁴⁷ Jiří Bystřický, *Mediální Diskurs Postmoderny: K Problematice Fatálních Strategii a Seduktivních Her Narativních Diskursů*, (Praha: Karolinum, 2001), 52.

⁴⁸ Manhmoud Salami, *John Fowles's Fiction and the Poetics of Postmodernism*. (London: Associated University Press, 1992), 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 55.

⁵⁰ See Salami, 13.

⁵¹ See Salami, 13.

⁵² Ibid, 13.

With reference to Fowles' works it has to be admitted, that there is a lot of influence of modernist traditions in his writing. What he once set as rules of the game, so that he does not change in the frame of necessity for obeying the rules. However, what connects him to postmodernism is regard to function and opportunities of empty spaces in the text. Through those spaces, he influences the reader.⁵³ Fowles' version of writing is a version of humanism, which takes into consideration the meaning of the penetration of dogmatic forms into language games. His attitude is mostly anti-illusionary, revealing, and is about some kind of unloaded form of self-reflection.⁵⁴ However, the appearance of empty spaces in the text is a common feature of several Fowles' books as well as a feature of postmodernism.

Fowles' type of postmodernism discourse is rather revealing, but in the final consequence, it is mostly and most importantly about the genuineness of things or at least about preserving the opportunity to let the genuineness things talk. And what is more, there are hidden identities in the game and at the same time, there is a control of leading crucial lines.⁵⁵

2.1 His writing

A significant period in John Robert Fowles' life was the time he spent in Greece. He started to write poetry to overwhelm long-time frustration about writing. He creates a lot of novels between years 1952 and 1960, but none of them were sent to the publisher, because he thought that they are not complete and might be too long.⁵⁶ There can be found a connection between his stay in Greece and *The Magus* because the setting of the book takes place just on this island and the book was influenced by this period of his life.

John Fowles published his first book in 1963 with a title *The Collector*. Thanks to this book he gained international attention. In the instant, he was considered as an extraordinary and innovative artist with incredibly powerful imagination. He

⁵³ See Bystřický, 56.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 57.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁵⁶John Fowles--The Web Site. "*Biography of John Fowles*". Accessed March 23, 2016. <http://www.fowlesbooks.com/biography.htm>.

affirmed his reputation when he published following books. To name some of them, it would be for example *The Magus* (1965), *The Aristos* (1968), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), *The Ebony Tower* (1974), *Daniel Martin* (1977), *Mantissa* (1982) and *A Maggot* (1985).⁵⁷ This is the list of few of Fowles' books and following paragraphs will contain specifics about several of them.

The *Magus* was published in 1966 and one year after, Fowles admitted during the interview, that the style of writing at that particular time was not "really healthy"⁵⁸ and that was "too insular, overly embroiled to the privacy"⁵⁹ and the provincial school, where studied (according to Fowles) several best authors of the time, was too much closed into itself. He also said that he thinks there are far too many writers who compose in a satirical way. And if everyone makes satire works, it loses its purpose. Fowles mentioned during the interview, that this fault could be partially publishers' from London. They release a lot of novels and approve everything.⁶⁰ Fowles made several interviews during his life, where he described his attitudes and opinions. One of the biggest interviews he provided was in book *Conversation with John Fowles* by Dianne L. Vipond.

Among other reasons, why his books were and are sold so much might be the fact, that he used sex theme in all of his works. In order to demonstrate sexual theme, the following paragraph will briefly focus on the content of Fowles' books from the sexual perspective. This topic is included in this bachelor thesis because it has a close connection with its analysis part. The theme of sex and seduction creates a substantial part of *The Magus* and many other Fowles' books. Also, this theme was common among postmodernist writers.

To demonstrate the topic of sex on examples, there are several works of John Fowles that could be mentioned: *The Collector*, his first novel written in 1963, tells a story about young man who capture girl in order to satisfy his romantic pictures, which are in reality sexual needs. In *The Magus* similar motive appears. A young man finds more interesting an unstable connection with a woman, who plays her fictional role full of

⁵⁷ John Fowles, *The Magus* (London: Random House, 2004), 1.

⁵⁸ Dianne L. Vipond, *Conversation with John Fowles* (Mississippi City: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 3.

seduction rather than a long-lasting relationship with his current girlfriend. In the book called *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, he unfolds the idea that sexual Puritanism in the era of Victorians was an insincere lie. In the book *Daniel Martin* sexual allusion also can be recognized as he changes sexual partners until he decides to marry a girl he met at the university. His *Mantissa* shows us a story about Muse, who performs first as a mean woman and at the end as a nymphet. And last but not least book, which supports the frequent usage of this theme in his novels, is *A Maggot* – the story is about a prostitute living in London in the eighteenth century, who is forced to have sexual intercourse with a butler while being watched by his master. John Fowles covers the topic of the erotic in his books very often and in one interview with Lorna Sage he admitted: “I teach better if I seduce.”⁶¹ By this statement, Fowles confirmed, that the sexual theme is vital for his writing and that he used it in novels.

While this bachelor thesis is mostly aimed at John Fowles and his novel *The Magus*, it is essential to provide some further information about this particular book. He wrote the first draft of the novel in 1952-1953 by the time he was moving back from Greece, where he was responsible for teaching young students at Anargyrios School. The duration of his visit on the island of Spetsai took two years. Because of the fact that *The Magus* was his first novel (but published as the third book in a row), he admitted having some troubles during writing this novel as it was his first work. According to the Pamela Cooper, John Fowles stated: “my strongest memory is of constantly having to abandon drafts of an inability to describe what I wanted”.⁶² The book itself allows readers to be indrawn into the story, which is in this case complicated and comprehensive, rather than develops some “specific social and political ideals”.⁶³ As soon as was *The Magus* released to the public in 1966, it was obvious that Fowles’s skills of telling the story happened to be more formed, forceful and complicated than it was in *The Collector*. The layout of *The Magus* is represented by self-confidence, intricacy, mystique and fictional games. The biggest eye-opening attribute of this fiction’s integrity is the fair distribution of text: while

⁶¹ See Kastan, 352.

⁶² Pamela Cooper, *The Fiction of John Fowles: Power, Creativity, Femininity* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1991), 51.

⁶³ Brooke Lenz, *John Fowles: Visionary and Voyeur* (New York: Rodopi, 2008), 75.

reader's act of reading he is enabled to examine several stories that are available for him. And further, there is subsequent characteristic of the fiction composition is the presence of three narrators. Those are Nicholas – he tells the whole story in first person, Mr. Conchis – while he talking about himself and the text is in quotation marks and then there is a narrator who cast in the last chapter and describes the situation.⁶⁴ When the narrator is Nicholas, he talks about his feelings and observations, which makes it easier for readers to understand his thoughts.

Fowles' work as a whole can be better understood by revealing some of the process used to revive the storyline, such as deliberate disobeying the rules of writing and other literary conventions, that was used on purpose to enhance the reader's attention. For example, *The French Lieutenant's woman* is probably the first British historiographical metafiction and in this book Fowles wanted to imitate the conventions of Victorian realism until the thirteenth chapter of the book when the narrator viciously admitted, that he has no idea who is Sarah and that the story is only a figment of the imagination. At this point, the imitating gently slides into parody. From this part for the sake of this matter reader is not that much willing to believe the story anymore.⁶⁵ Fowles wrote several books in his life, but this work only focuses on a number of them. Another well-known book of his is *Mantissa* and the next paragraph will be dealing with this book.

John Fowles himself said about the novel *Mantissa*, that it is kind of humor, or if you like, a joke or a play with only a tiny meaning, however still pointing to a certain implicitly semantic framework, namely to the issue of content ambivalence of novel's seductive character, to the game of language between the author and the main protagonist, and to the object, thus the examination of possibilities of meta-language narrative versions and the importance of transparency. When we look closely to the polarization of the Fowles' story construction and to the relationship between the main character – novelist Maurice Green and his Muse Erato, we can see also the author's intention was to perceive the meaning of the woman not only as an opponent in the seductive game, but also as a role of romantic inspiration. In this case, it can be said, that in each phase of communication between the novelist and his Muse, there are provided thoroughly

⁶⁴ See Salami, 73.

⁶⁵ See Bertens, and Natoli, 133.

elaborated dialogic games of subversive manipulation with the subject of the discourse. Through those facts is offered sufficiently understandable and informative line of instant seductive forms. The woman as an opponent in Fowles' version is used as an implicit correction of author's intention, as a disturbance of semantic transparency and, of course as a pattern of coincidence and at the same time as a fatal instance of the seductive game,⁶⁶ that is often found in Fowles' books and will be discussed further in analysis part of this work.

⁶⁶ See Bystřický, 11.

II. ANALYSIS

3 THREE MAIN THEMES IN *THE MAGUS*

In order to remind the story to the reader, I would like to start this part of analysis with a brief description of the content of John Fowles' *The Magus* because knowing the story is essential for further understanding of the analysis. The plot begins in London when a young graduate of Oxford University – Nicholas Urfe – is applying for the job as an English teacher of boy's boarding school on a distant Greek island called Phraxos. At this point of his life he realizes, that he wants to leave England and start his life somewhere else, leaving his girlfriend Alison behind. Most of the story takes place on the isolated island, where the main character meets Mr. Maurice Conchis, the eccentric and well-educated man. This man refers to the label 'Magus', because soon after they introduce themselves, the Magus starts to play his psychological game with Nicholas' mind. He was curious and regularly visited this old man in his luxury villa on the remote and deserted part of the island called Bourani. Mr. Conchis tried a secret social experiment, in which he cast Nicholas as the main protagonist. At any moment of this game, Nicholas could stop it, but his new romantic feelings for one of the actors of the experiment – Lily/ Julie - did not let him stop. After some time and after the final breakthrough, when everyone revealed the truth about each other during a ceremony, Nicholas was forced to leave the school and went back to the London. He found a new apartment and continued with his research to find the real truth. But the questions remain. What is true and what is a lie. What is reality and what is deception. And what is freedom. In the practical part of my work, I would like to analyze three main themes that appear to be the bearing ideas, which are utilized in *The Magus*.

3.1 Reality and Deception

Among other themes that can be recognized in the book *The Magus*, the aim of this bachelor's thesis is to focus on three of them. Because those themes are closely connected to each other and one concurs to another, I have decided to structure this chapter by combining two themes, because they are linked together and need to be mentioned as a whole. This chapter will be dealing with themes of reality and deception. The following chapter will be discussing the theme of freedom.

Before analyzing themes in the story and demonstrating them with the examples of text parts, I would like to provide a definition of reality and deception. As far as I am concerned, the reality itself is an abstract concept, because each person on the planet can see the reality in a slightly different way, everyone has diverse opinion on the matter and has a unique sense of perception of the world. But as a whole, the reality is something in what somebody believes in the particular moment, for example: what is, what exists and what is happening at a given time. For someone, the meaning of reality is a state when he or she believes in what they actually see with their eyes and what do they feel at the moment. Of course, this kind of reality is subjective and can be easily disturbed by someone's intention to change it. This brings us to the second theme – the deception. This kind of mystification is widely detected in the book. It is a way of purposeful behavior and deceptive actions, that one person or a group of people knowingly do wrong on someone else and as its consequence is a change in their view of reality.

The majority of the book has one narrator. The character of Nicholas is the main narrator and guides the reader toward the almost whole book. Through his narration, he gives the reader a chance to see how he personally feels during his experiences on Greek island, what are his inner thoughts in particular situations, and what his assumptions are like. His approaches are also described there as well as his opinions, in the way, what he truly considers as real. That gives the readers opportunity and space to understand Nicholas's mind and allows them to make their own opinion about events discussed in the story. Nicholas talks about things and people, showing us the reality, which he believes is true and he is completely convinced his personal reality is the real one.

At the beginning of the book, the story is located in London, England and after some time, the main protagonist finds a job on Greek island Phraxos and leaves. This is a moment, where we find *reality*, as a decisive aspect, directly in the story – in the role of the affective situation, which forces the hero to decide. London and Phraxos are two different places, not only from the geographical point of view but also two distinct forms of reality. London is described by Nicholas as an ordinary, tedious and average place to be, but when it comes to Greece he claims to be “totally and forever in love with the Greek landscape from the moment I arrived”⁶⁷ and he said the island “Phraxos was beautiful.

⁶⁷ See Fowles, 49.

There was no other adjective; it was not just pretty, picturesque, charming – it was simply and effortlessly beautiful. It took my breath away when I first saw it [...]”⁶⁸ I believe London is presented in a normal and boring way, because it is supposed to represent the real world outside and its everydayness, while Greece, Phraxos, and Bourani (remote area on the island) are portrayed as beautiful and magical land with many other affirmative attributes, which sound almost unbelievable, evoking the feelings like this is not and could not be a real world. Every time Nicholas mentions something about Greece, he emphasizes only the positive aspects.

But throughout the book, he changed his sense of reality few times. First, he lived in a world (England), where he knows its system and conventions. Then he behaves as there was no outer world outside the Greece – “The outer world, England, London, became absurdly and sometimes terrifyingly unreal.”⁶⁹ But eventually, he again believes that the reality is in England and that Greece is only imaginary world, where absolutely everything can happen. Differences between England and Greece, as they are depicted by Nicholas point to the struggle of his perception of reality. As he came to the new land for the first time, he draws a comparison between these two countries with words: “[...] quality of Greece, the quality that makes it unique. In England, we live in a very muted, calm, domesticated relationship with what remains of our natural landscape and its soft northern light; in Greece landscape and land are so beautiful, so all-present, so intense, so wild, that the relationship is immediately love-hatred, one of passion.”⁷⁰ In the book, Nicholas mentioned several times that he wants to get away from the ordinary life in England and from its rules and conventions. He was bored with this way of living and with his girlfriend Alison Kelly, so he decided to quickly escape from it and to find a shelter in suspiciously perfect Greece.

I believe that there can be found a similar connection in the relationship between Alison and Lily as it is in the case of England and Greece. To give an example of those connections, it would be the fact, that Alison is a straight and honest person, who is in love with Nicholas and is not afraid to admit it. Nicholas is aware of that and wants to escape

⁶⁸ See Fowles, 50.

⁶⁹ See Fowles, 56.

⁷⁰ See Fowles, 49.

from her, similarly as he wants to escape from London. While Lily, on the other hand, is well-educated a young woman, who loves the same things as Nicholas such as literature, and has a similar attitude to life. She and Greece are too ideal to be real. I would assimilate Alison's role to the same role as what England stands for and Lily's role to what Greece stands for. Everything that is linked to each country is supposed to represent both the real world and the world completely fictional.

I would describe Alison Kelly as a truthful person, who is honest about her feeling in every situation. She is an open-minded person and sincerely loves Nicholas, who is absolutely aware of it. She is a normal girl from the normal world; nothing is very special about her – similarly as it is in reality. Considering that the reality could be sometimes boring and monotonous, Nicholas wanted to emancipate from it and from her. Alison interprets the real world as the only thing Nicholas could be sure about.

Nicholas started to adopt the life on the island and one day, after some time spent in Greece and some exchanged letters with Alison, he realized he wants to separate himself from the world, where he used to live. "But Alison and London were gone, dead, exorcized; I had cut them away from my life."⁷¹ This signals that Nicholas is over his old life and relationships and now prefers to choose life on Phraxos and everything that is connected to it, including the game which was already prepared for him on the island.

Although there were some Nicholas's suggestions about hesitating which world he should choose, he eventually had chosen fictional world over reality. We can see his inner thoughts during his thinking about the letter from Alison and her arrival to the Athens: "But it came like an intrusion – of dispensable reality into pleasure, of now artificial duty into instinct. I couldn't leave the island, I couldn't waste three days in Athens."⁷² The situation on Bourani became to be more important for him, much more than the reality he left behind in England.

Nicholas described the excitement about Greece with words: "But with love came a contradictory, almost irritating, feeling of impotence and inferiority, as if Greece were woman so sensually provocative that I must fall physically and desperately in love with her, and at the same time so calmly aristocratic that I should never be able to approach

⁷¹ See Fowles, 54

⁷² See Fowles, 202.

her.”⁷³This sentence should capture Nicholas’s feelings about the new place he discovered. And with the new place comes different perception of reality. I believe this also represent some kind of future connection with Lily/Julie. Although he is talking about Greece, it appears like it could be also applied for description of the relationship with Lily, because he had similar feelings for her.

There is an ever-present question of role playing and switching masks in the story. Actors are hiding their identities behind lies and each of them has several roles, which they change during the story. It could not be said with certainty, whether they unfold their real self or if they just put on another mask. That leaves Nicholas on the edge of the reality, because every time he believes he has finally found the truth, in fact, it was another lie from actors and Conchis, who is the director of those lies. “I was beginning to lose my sense of total sureness that he [Conchis] was inventing a new stage of the masque.”⁷⁴ Nicholas was often confused and he tried to rationally clarify what is happening around him. In fact, he tried to understand this different reality, which was presented to him, but this reality was constantly changing thanks to lies that have been told Nicholas and deceptive actions made by actors.

Lily Montgomery, the young actress who occasionally switches roles according to the screenplay to Julie Holmes, is a character of the game on Phraxos. Nicholas fell in love with her. She has several roles, but the main point of her performance was to confuse Nicholas. One day, she was a young schizophrenic Lily Montgomery as a patient of Maurice Conchis, and then she plays a role of Julie Holmes, whose was hired with her twin sister June (who was later on Rose), to film the movie. But most of the time Lily was playing a seductive game with Nicholas. The constant changing roles and lying are, examples of deception and I see some similarities and connections with fiction because Lily is almost perfect and she is not a representation of the real world, she is only one of the mysteries on the island. Nicholas falsely felt in love with fantasy.

The first hint of deception and mysteries, which the narrator Nicholas first saw and realized himself, was when he started to feel some changes in the reality on Bourani, and he amended it with the sentence: “I did not think about the future. [...] The pattern of

⁷³ See Fowles, 49.

⁷⁴ See Fowles, 224.

destiny seemed clear: down and down, and down. But then the mysteries began.”⁷⁵ That was his first notice about deceptive actions, observed in actors’ behavior.

With regard to the mysteries mentioned above, I would like to describe the character – Maurice Conchis. He is a wealthy man about sixty years old, who I am convinced is the embodiment of the deception in the book. He is the reason why all the mysteries and lies began. Conchis is the creator of the obscure psychological game happening on the island. The purpose of this game is not clear both to Nicholas and reader until the very end of the book. And maybe not even after. The fact that Nicholas is not aware of the purpose of the game is an example of apprehending his reality, because he is forced to believe in lies, and the example of deception at the same time.

Although Conchis is one of the main characters, the reader and Nicholas have only very limited knowledge about him. And also, they cannot be sure about the truthfulness of that knowledge. However, what is certain, Conchis is a specialist when it comes to human behavior and relationships. He created a brilliant net of lies, including actors, stories and mystical references to characters and events from the past, and he used all of it together to deceive Nicholas and to play with his mind. To be more persuasive, Conchis involved in things, that had an effect on all the senses of his body. That makes it easier to deceive Nicholas’s mind. For example through smell: “There was a vague smell of drains in the still air, of a cesspool somewhere. I got into bed, and lay thinking about Conchis.”⁷⁶, or through voices: “At first hallucinatorily faint, impossible to pinpoint, it began. I thought it must be coming through the walls from a gramophone in Conchis’s bedroom.”⁷⁷ or through visuals: “There was no light, no obvious sound except the crickets in the garden.”⁷⁸ Conchis had connected all options in order to mystify Nicholas. And thanks to all his abilities and opportunities how to deceive Nicholas’s mind and to play with him, Conchis represent the magus, while he has power in his hands - the power of controlling others’ minds and to change their view of reality.

⁷⁵ See Fowles, 63.

⁷⁶ See Fowles, 132.

⁷⁷ See Fowles, 133.

⁷⁸ See Fowles, 133.

The magus – in this case, Conchis - can exploit the situation to his benefit and through his elaborate discourses and actions he can easily force people to do what he wants them to do, remaining them to think they did it based on their own decision.

All mysteries happen to begin with the Nicholas's arrival to the Greek island. Conchis created a big scene for his psychological game. The scene contained actors, setting, coherent and well-advised net of lies and mystical references to the past. Nicholas's role, whether he wanted or not, was unspoken and he did not know, what was going on until the prepared final scene, which I will comment later.

The game happening on the island was a game where the main character was supposed to be Nicholas. After some time spent on Phraxos, he was revealing the truth step by step. And when he believed he figured out something, actors and Conchis came on the surface with another lie in order to mystify Nicholas again. It was a vicious circle of deception, where one lie leads to another. Nicholas realized, that "one thing was clear. There had been Leverrier, Mitford, and myself; but then others whose names I did not yet know back in the 'thirties; a long line. It gave me a return of great expectations; and the courage to face whatever new was being prepared in that now uncurtained theatre over on the far side."⁷⁹ Nicholas discovered that this game already happened in the past, which I believe pointing to the fact, that it is the repetitive and elaborate plan of deceptive actions. Yet he is ready to accept what actions will come and he is willing to be part of this game. However, Nicholas will never find out why he was chosen for this experiment.

I understand Nicholas's ignorance of truth as a sign of the deception when all actors on the island purposely lied to him. And because he believed them, they changed his perception of reality. In another word, he believed in reality, which was constructed and affected by lies. Nicholas noted during his inner flow of ideas as he was thinking about Conchis: "Every truth in his world was a sort of lie; and every lie a sort of truth."⁸⁰ I believe that this sentence means that Nicholas was not sure, what is really happening on the island, but at that point, he was willing to believe in at least something. He did not want to admit he loses the reign over his feelings, thoughts, and reality.

⁷⁹ See Fowles, 392.

⁸⁰ See Fowles, 294.

Nicholas soon realized that he cannot believe almost anybody. After some time spent on the island, he spotted deceptive behavior of others. In the book, there have been some situations, when Conchis provided several discourses about his life and experiences. For example, he was talking about his mysterious and wealthy old friend. His name was Alphonse de Deukans and Conchis describe their friendship in the way, which very conspicuously reminded on the relationship between him and Nicholas. He said about de Deukans: “I learnt very little about him for many months, although I saw him often. This was because he had never anything to say about himself or his past. And discouraged every kind of question.”⁸¹ It was clear evidence, that there is a reference and connection which Conchis wanted to pinpoint and he also admitted in a way, that he never say Nicholas the truth about himself and his past. This discourse shows, how deceptively the magus plays with the reality he presents to Nicholas.

Another of Conchis’s narration was about his experience of World War I. As everything that he says, there is no guarantee it would be true. During his talk, he wanted to test Nicholas’s mind. He wants him to play dice, but with suicide pills containing hydrocyanic acid. Through his ability to control people, Conchis got inside Nicholas’s head and disconcerted him for a moment. Nicholas had to swear that if the number on the dice will be six, he must eat the suicide pill. Nicholas thought: “His face was totally serious. I felt myself wanting to swallow.”⁸² This sentence proves that the magus changed Nicholas’s way of accepting the reality. I believe that the main aim of the test was to show Nicholas, what kind of person he really is inside because people usually see the real truth at the moment when they are close to death.

During their talks, Nicholas was almost every time trapped in lies of the fictional world, because he was not able to distinguish, what is true and what is a lie. “I felt I was also beginning to neatly stack the mystery of Bourani and Conchis.”⁸³ Nicholas wanted to come closer to the explanation of mysteries on the island and to reveal the truth. Readers of the book are caught in the same situation as Nicholas. Because he is the narrator throughout almost all book, they never know, whether Conchis or others are telling the

⁸¹ See Fowles, 176.

⁸² See Fowles, 126.

⁸³ See Fowles, 294.

truth or not. Readers saw only Nicholas's side of reality, so it remained a mystery. This is also evidence of deception while actors are using masks and lying all the time as it was revealed and even admitted by Conchis.

As it was mentioned, Conchis made a theatre, which was located "behind the house. With curtains. A real theatre."⁸⁴ And its purpose was to amuse and entertain this old man. Again, both the reader and Nicholas do not know, whether what Conchis says is true about everything he mentions. There is ever-present conflict of trust in the relation with Maurice Conchis, which is a significant factor in perceiving the reality. In fact, he built-up the huge and expensive theatre, where the stage was the whole island, actors were all people on the island, the scenario had an only basic structure and the scenes were unfolding according to Nicholas's actions. Everything has conformed based on Conchis's conducts. He even confessed the fact, that "We are all actors here, my friend. None of us is what we really are. We all lie some of the time, and some of us all the time."⁸⁵ This was Conchis's method how to cause a lot more uncertainty in Nicholas's mind, it is the proof of a game between deception and reality.

Another indication of lies and deception is the fact that Conchis presented himself as a passionate art collector. He claimed to have a wide collection of valuable art pieces like paintings, sculptures, and musical instruments, but it turned out to be only falsification. Or another example that I would like to mention are situations when Conchis purposely twisting the reality which he serves to Nicholas. The magus controlled Nicholas's mail and provided him several fake letters. As a part of his game, he also lied about Alison. He told Nicholas she committed suicide and as an evidence he prepared fake cutting from newspapers and their titles were saying: "AIR HOSTESS SUICIDE"⁸⁶ and "UNHAPPY IN LOVE SO KILLS HERSELF".⁸⁷ But that was not true. Or one day, Conchis reconstructed a war scene on the island and soldiers captured Nicholas. That confirms the argument, that Conchis was using several different tools and masks to deceive Nicholas and to mystify his point of view and his reality. Conchis also hypnotized

⁸⁴ See Fowles, 390.

⁸⁵ See Fowles, 404.

⁸⁶ See Fowles, 396.

⁸⁷ See Fowles, 397

Nicholas, who was after all confused because Conchis also intoxicated him with drugs during the process of hypnosis.

There was a prepared trial for Nicholas when all main participants and authors of the experiment wanted to reveal the truth about their identities. They kept Nicholas under the influence of drugs for several days and when it comes to the process itself, he was humiliated, confused, and besides other things, he had to watch his beloved Lily during a sexual act with one of the actors. The group of people dressed in mythological masks gave him an explanation for the experiment:

“Well, so, Mr Urfe, you will have guessed our secret by now. We are an international group of psychologists, which I have the honour [...] to lead. For various reasons the path of research in which we are all especially interested requires us to have subjects that are not volunteers, that are not even aware that they are subjects of an experiment.”⁸⁸

But in the spirit of the whole book, Nicholas did not know whether to believe them or not, because it did not have to be necessarily true.

Due to his several-day absence in his employment at school on Phraxos, Nicholas lost his job. I believe that the school represented a little spot of English reality on the island - on the island, where everything was somehow possible. I am convinced that the situation, when Nicholas was forced to leave the school and went back to England, figuratively represented his return to the reality and to the real world.

3.2 Freedom

Before analyzing the theme of freedom, I would like to provide its definition. *Freedom* is a state of mind when we can choose anything we would like to do, as if there were no laws. It is a state when we as a human being are not forced to do something against our will and we are not limited in our actions – those limitations could be physical or psychical. The case of psychical freedom is when you can be yourself and nobody corrects or controls

⁸⁸ See Fowles, 506.

your behaviour, thoughts, ideas or decisions. This is one of the main problems of Nicholas. Under magus's control, he became unfree in his mind and for a short time he was also deprived of his own physical freedom - he was captured for few days by Conchis and authors of the experiment.

Maybe one of the first suggestions of freedom was when Nicholas and Alison had their first conversation with each other. Alison described herself as a free person and he did not know "whether freedom was her pose or her truth."⁸⁹ Nicholas was not sure about her nature and character, so it was hard to identify what exactly freedom means to her.

In the case of giving freedom to the other person in the relationship, freedom was mentioned in the dialogue between Nicholas and Alison while they were talking about his leaving to Greece: "I'm going to be an air hostess, and you're going to Greece. You're free."⁹⁰ That means both of them will gain absolute freedom from their relationship, they will no longer have any commitments and can again work as an independent unit again.

When Nicholas was still in England, he met one of the formal participants of the game of Mr. Conchis on Bourani. His name was Mitford and he provided Nicholas some basic information about the island, the job at the school and also warned him with words: "Beware of the waiting-room."⁹¹ This may signal the question of freedom. When Mitford told him so, Nicholas naturally began to be curious and that limited his freedom in the decision-making process. When he found himself in the situation as he was walking in the forest on the island and discovered the sign on the fence, because of his curiosity he decided to explore the meaning hidden behind the sign. Admittedly, he decided to leave at first. "I stood so long that I became impatient with my indecision, and forced myself to turn away."⁹² But soon after and on the impulse from Mitford, Nicholas passed the sign and went further. He was in some way pushed to make this decision and it had a further consequence on his freedom. Otherwise without knowing any references, he might have decided not to continue in exploring the island and he might not go behind the fence.

⁸⁹ See Fowles, 26.

⁹⁰ See Fowles, 39

⁹¹ See Fowles, 71.

⁹² See Fowles, 71.

By the reason that all themes are connected, I would like to mention the situation of the test with the suicide pills once more, but from the different perspective. And that would be a perspective of freedom. When Nicholas threw the dice and saw the number six, he was supposed to take the suicide pill. But he did not. He had space to make a decision and he decided to free himself from the commitment. As far as I am concerned, this is an example of freedom, because he made a liberal decision according to his conscience. Conchis reacted to his action with this sentence: “What you have just decided is precisely what I decided that morning forty years ago at Neuve Chapelle. You have behaved exactly as any intelligent human being should behave. I congratulate you.”⁹³ The purpose of the test was to figure out, how Nicholas would react to the question of losing freedom, losing a life.

Because of the fact, that Nicholas was involved in a labyrinth of lies, which consisted of constant changing of the reality, using fictions and switching roles, he was rather declined from his own freedom. He was forced by his own curiosity and by the rising level of involvement in the game, which leads to the state of having practically no freedom in decision making process. The whole net of reality and fiction was prepared for him, and he became to have only a little power to make his own decision and to affect the future.

After the final trial on the island, Nicholas went back to England. He might have feelings, that after he emancipated from magus’s authority on the island, he would be finally free. But not even after being back in the reality – England – Nicholas controls his actions and his freedom was limited. For example, when he met the new candidate for a position of the teacher on the boarding school on Phraxos, he hesitated whether to tell him what is happening on the island. Nicholas was not sure if it is not just another test from Conchis in order to examine Nicholas’s behaviour. He was also afraid, that Conchis would not let him to see Alison again in the case that he says something inappropriate.

Also, at the end of the book, he almost lost his natural self, because, after his experience on the island, he believes that everything around him is only “theatre” and people are hired actors, looking after his actions. He loses his freedom, while he is convinced, he is still being observed and that he has to behave himself in order to not be

⁹³ See Fowles, 126.

denied his reward. In this case, the reward is supposed to be Alison. Nicholas became to be paranoid about the idea that he is being watched. At the end of the book he meets Alison and he told her: “Now listen, Alison. I know who is watching us, I know where he’s watching. I know why we are here.”⁹⁴ I am convinced, this was exactly Conchis’s intention - to make Nicholas totally insecure and to disrupt his freedom. But “there were no watching eyes. The windows were blank as they looked. The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre. They had perhaps told her it was a theatre, and she believed them, and I believed her.”⁹⁵ That only proves, Nicholas was lost in the spiral of deception, which truly influenced his space and personal freedom of thoughts.

The author left the end of the book opened. Fowles gave the reader freedom to think about their own ending of the story, so he or she could speculate what would Nicholas’s destiny would be like, whether he re-established his relationship with Alison or if the drama on Bourani will influence his future life and his future freedom.

⁹⁴ See Fowles, 652.

⁹⁵ See Fowles, 654.

CONCLUSION

The topic of my bachelor thesis is based on one of the greatest works written by John Fowles – *The Magus*. Even though Fowles is regarded as a postmodern writer, there are many features in his book, that lead us to recognize some of the modernists' methods of writing. It is quite often seen phenomenon not just at Fowles' books because many other postmodern writers were influenced by the modern style of writing at the beginning of their writing career. Both two periods - modernism as well as following postmodernism - exhibit lot of common literary features.

The main aim of this thesis is not just to describe main literary features of postmodernism or to analyze the content of Fowles' book, but there is another task to fulfill in the practical part – to clarify the role of three themes: freedom, reality, and deception. In the theoretical part there we can find a brief description of postmodernism, its roots in the previous modern era and a short outline of the situation in British postmodern writing. Fowles is mentioned here as one of the most substantive writers in postmodernism, especially some of his literary methods are depicted, also some of his other works are listed with a concise description. In the last part of the theory is called His writing, and there is an explication of *The Magus*' origin, principally Fowles' sources of inspiration, forms of Fowles' writing which were gradually changing and developing.

The analytical part focuses on the implementation of the main aim of this bachelor thesis, it means to analyze Fowles' *The Magus* from the point of view of the role of the three themes: freedom, reality, and deception. These themes were analyzed by the practical parsing of this work and its parts. As it was shown by the examples in analysis – chapters “Reality and Deception”, and chapter “Freedom” these three themes are constantly present in the whole story, they inconspicuously offer new perspectives in every moment of reading and as a writer's benefit, they work as an element constantly demanding reader's attention. All the subtopics are present in the background, but actually, they form the motive frame of the story. Particularly the reality and deception are linked together and they are used as a literary contradiction, which causes an aspect of narrative tension. The question of freedom is also used as a subject of the main character's contemplation, it mingles with other topics and it often gives rise to the uncertainty of the main character's decisions. Deception is incorporated into the storyline, mostly it is mentioned in critical moments and in a sophisticated way it offers finesse and variety to complete the perfection of the story meaning. In my opinion, all those three themes are connected together, they are

the basic elements of the story which make whole this Fowles' work not just interesting, but really remarkable. By analysis of literary sources and by realization of the practical analysis the main set aims of this bachelor thesis have been achieved. As a final resume, it has to be submitted, that *The Magus* is genuinely extraordinary work which defies of contemporary literary trends and Fowles, using an unconventional form of writing, predetermined the way of postmodern literature progression. This thesis argues, that Fowles, in *The Magus*, works with themes of freedom, reality and deception with the intention to demonstrate the complicated process of human thinking, feeling and deciding, depending on the circumstances that is human surrounded by and the way he understands them.

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