



FACULTY OF ARTS Charles University

Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures

Posudek oponenta na bakalářskou práci Nikol Kovářikové “Myths and Existential Masks in John Fowles’s *The Magus*”

John Fowles was, during his lifetime, one of the most famous and most often discussed novelists of his generation. Thirteen years after his death, according to some British literary commentators, his works are not as frequently mentioned as before. Nevertheless, if there is a waning in critical and perhaps even readers’ attention, his novels are still regarded by many as superb and gripping reading with a touch of the experimental and intellectual. His postmodern novels play with what for some may be just intellectual snobbery, but for others are haunting questions that lie behind the secrets of human existence. Relations between reality and imagination, truth and fiction, are issues that crop up in most of Fowles’s books, but they play a very prominent role in *The Magus*. This is a book with a very convoluted plot, numerous literary influences, combining allusions to Greek myth, Shakespeare and a philosophical dimension that puts it in line with the existential novels of Sartre and Camus. Also, many students tend to be discouraged by the dense quality and sheer quantity of pages of this novel, finding it downright incomprehensible and unfathomable. Therefore, I appreciate greatly not only the courage to wade into this arena, but also the reading skills of the author of this thesis.

In my commentary I will focus first on the language and style, then move to some questions pertaining to structure and general interpretation.

Generally speaking, the language and style are on a high level. Ideas are formulated in good academic English, the style quite appropriate for a BA thesis. However, in some cases, proofreading could have been conducted with more care. Sometimes, there is a tendency to slip into a “high” style which becomes incomprehensible, e.g. on page 10 the whole of line 7, or later on the same page, what is the meaning of “semantical necessity”? Also, the frequently occurring phrase “veiled in masks” is strictly speaking nonsense. And, the transliteration of the Greek word for freedom “ἐλευθερία” is, if I know my Greek alphabet, “eleutheria” (see errors on pages 50 and 51. And, by the way, it was also one of the epithets of the goddess Artemis.

Ms Kovářiková seems well informed about her subject matter and she presents the theoretical background in her introductory chapter (from meanings of myth, psychoanalysis to existentialism). However, the connection with the rest of the text is relatively loose. This problem is most fully vivid in chapter 3 on *The Collector*. It remains questionable for me why even include that section, especially since other texts by Fowles are not mentioned. The following chapter on *The Magus* itself is much better organized and clear. So, to finally ask a question here: Can you trace briefly, the idea of myth and freedom of existence in several texts by Fowles? Is there some common thread? And what is so distinct about *The Magus*?

Can you comment on the significance (strangeness?) of the title? You mention it in the thesis, but the magus/magician is also a card in Tarot. It has a certain ambiguity of representation which could tie in with your presentation of the elements. Also, how would you see the card game in relation to your topic?

The submitted BA thesis fully meets the requirements for such a work. Consequently, I most definitely recommend it for defence. The preliminary suggested grade (the final one will be the result of the defence) is excellent to very good

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V Praze dne 27.8.2018

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