Persona and Extraverted Sensation Type in John Fowles's *The Magus*

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The archetype of the persona has been defined by Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, as "a compromise formation between external reality and the individual. In essence, therefore, it is a function for adapting the individual to the real world" (Jung 1966: 507). The ego of an individual undergoes identification to a certain extent with his or her persona, but one must always bear in mind that "the persona is nothing real: it is a compromise between individual and society as to what a man should appear to be" (Jung 1966: 246). Even thought the persona is a necessary evil since it allows us to cope with social requirements and collective expectations, one must not overlook the fact that this archetype is far from representing human individuality as a whole, on the contrary, it represents merely a one-sided facet, a semblance of ourselves that we like or feel compelled to display. Because it creates a sense of alienation between what we seem and what we really are, and thus a psychological imbalance, "Jung considers the dissolution of this archetype and its restoration to the unconscious as the first step towards individuation, a lifelong process aiming at the fulfilment of one's own potential. Individuation begins only with a withdrawal from normal modes of social action, epitomized by the breakdown of the persona" (Homans 1995: 207). However, since it is no easy task, a state of inner disorder is associated with the disintegration of the archetype due to the sudden overflow of unconscious contents, and Jung describes possible reactions towards these contents and their impact upon the individual. Among the common reactions, Jung mentions a regressive restoration of the persona archetype, a possible course only for the man who owes the critical failure of his life to his own inflatedness (Jung 1966: 259).

The regressive restoration represents the negative resurrection of the persona archetype subsequent to an event affecting the level of consciousness, in Nicholas Urfe's case, the impact of realizing his literary talent had been just make-believe. Therefore, after having divested himself of the persona of the literary artist by acknowledging that he "was not a poet" (Fowles 2004: 58), he is now left with a limited means of perceiving and coping with reality, which fosters his newly

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assumed persona, that of the sensualist who only desires to relish and possess the idealized object, not to fictionalize it: I was both a sensualist and an adventurer; a failed poet, still seeking resurrection in events, if not in lines (Fowles 2004: 202).

Throughout the novel, Nicholas Urfe can only grasp and internalize reality if it is reinforced by a materialization or a reification that appeals to his senses; however, the perceptions acquired are no longer projected through literary endeavours, they remain locked within, which is why the subjects feels the need to possess and to objectify reality, habit that is clearly applicable to the protagonist.

The regressively restored persona of the sensualist operates an interesting shift in his psychological type. He has ceased resorting to metaphorical impressions and, when relating to the world, he now uses sensation exclusively in order to seek to possess the world of reality and alterity, habit meant to satisfy his constant need for intense sensations. The persona that the regression reveals is always a personality regression, accompanied by impairment of the reality-perception. Since the extraverted sensation type focuses solely on objective reality, which he seeks to internalize, the imprint of individuality necessary if one is to ascend on the scale of personal growth is downgraded; Jung underlines the fact that one of the inherent aspects of the persona reconstruction is manifested in trying "to forget if possible that one has an unconscious at all" (Jung 1966: 179).

Since rendering internal impressions has proven to be an unsatisfactory means of relating to the world, Nicholas needs to find a different medium: if in the beginning he resorts to the metaphorical and the descriptive as a means of projecting his highly subjective input, he now seeks only to seize reality and otherness, since what he experiences "serves at most as a guide to fresh sensations; anything new that comes within his range of interest is acquired by way of sensation and has to serve its ends" (Jung 1971: 606); in other words, everything is seen as something of interest insofar as it is capable of yielding a sensational account and it is habitually objectified in order to be "possessible".

The cognitive function Nicholas uses during his persona-identification to orient himself in the world is that of physical sensation; the opposition between the two types he embodies, at first that of the introverted sensation, corresponding to the persona of the poet and subsequently that of the extraverted sensation type, in accordance with the regressively restored persona of the sensualist, lies in the manner in which sensations from the outer world are managed, namely projected through metaphor and introjected through reflection, respectively, as different modes of reacting towards extrinsic stimuli; in other words, the main difference between the extraverted and introverted sensation type is that introversion renders "a faithful rendering of the *impression* made by the object on the subject," while extraversion "would produce a realistic *reflection* of the object" (Sharp 1987: 80, italics in the text). Furthermore, if the introverted sensation type resorts to transcending the image through "the patina of age-old subjective experience," extraverted sensation "seizes on the momentary existence of things open to the light of day" (Jung 1971: 649). If Nicholas, as the introverted artist contemplates the serene mythical Greece, the seizure of the momentary undertaken by the extraverted sensation type translates in the narrative into Nicholas's constant desire to encapsulate the immediacy of reality and of otherness; in his eyes, Greece evolves

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(or involves) from an object of admiration, which he fictionalizes, into an object that he needs to possess: upon discovering that the south side of the island was not deserted as he had initially thought, he experiences a "Crusoelike resentment, since the solitude of the south side of the island must now be spoilt and I had come to feel possessive about it" (Fowles 2004: 67).

After the dissolution of the poet persona and the assuming of the sensualist persona, the perception of reality is no longer externalized through contemplative description, but the object is internalized by the subject according to the need to relish and possess it; suddenly, the landscape of Greece is perceived by the protagonist as evincing "a sort of anonymity" (*Ibidem*: 59) just as he realized his literary endeavours were in vain and he will not become a poet: the subject has internalized the anonymity of the island. As Nicholas loads the gun in his histrionic suicide attempt, he is distracted by the distant and solitary song of a girl, sounding "disembodied, of place, not person. [...] [I]t seemed intensely mysterious, welling out of a solitude and suffering that made mine trivial and absurd" (*Ibidem*: 60). The song echoes his own fragmentariness, created through the univocal use of cognitive functions, and it has been stated that "its haunting music exposes even Nicholas's attempted suicide as a foolish literalization of poetic imagery" (Neary 1992: 131). It also reveals how it is the immediacy of physicality that detracts him from his aestheticized suicide: "I sat with the gun across my knees, unable to move while the sound floated down through the evening air" (Fowles 2004: 60). The song is further described as bearing an almost physical correspondence with the phenomenal world: "the sky darkened, the sea paled to a nacreous grey. Over the mountains there were pinkish bars of high cloud in the still strong light" (*Ibidem*: 60). Nicholas absorbs the song through all the senses, conveying a phenomenon of synesthesia: "All the land and the sea held light, as if light was warmth" (*Ibidem*: 61). Synesthesia has been described as "a confusion of the senses where the excitation of one sense triggers stimulation in a completely different sensory modality" (Ternaux 2003: 321), being therefore a phenomenon based of physical association and transfer between the senses, which accounts for the fact that Nicholas needs to enrich his means of perceiving reality, but instead of employing his undifferentiated cognitive functions, he resorts to juggling between different sense organs.

The protagonist then recalls the image of the *gabbia*, about which Conradi (1982: 45) comments that "this self-imposed romantic incarceration prefigures the opposing liberating/imprisoning magical enclosure of Bourani":

> a harsh black canary cage strung high up the side of the towering campanile, in which prisoners were left to starve to death and rot in full view of the town below. And looking up at it I remembered that winter in Greece, that gabbia I had constructed for myself out of light, solitude and self-delusions. To write poetry and to commit suicide, apparently so contradictory, had really been the same, attempts at escape. And my feelings, at the end of that wretched term, were those of a man who knows he is in a cage, exposed to the jeers of all his old ambitions until he dies (Fowles 2004: 64).

The symbol of the cage constructed out of self-delusions is representative for the extraverted sensation psychological type in that the subject experiences solely an inward flow of psychic energy so that the self is isolated through intrinsic projections, without any personal input of individuality. Nicholas Urfe, as the

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extravert sensation type, contents himself to interiorizing reality in order to grasp it, as opposed to his former introverted attitude when he projected from within onto the surrounding world of reality and alterity. Therefore, the sense of individuality is constantly impaired by the subjects' need either to project and impose an idealized input upon the object – behaviour that best describes the introverted sensation type – or to introject the reflection of the object in order to absorb and possess it – as characteristic of the extraverted sensation type.

The aforementioned attitudes are illustrated at the narrative level through the protagonist's attitude towards Greece and towards feminine alterity. Since Alison embodies straightforwardness and the reality Nicholas seeks to distant himself from as dictated by the persona of the poet artist, he cannot project his idealizing impulses upon her, thus seeking a more abstract, mythical entity that would respond to and better accommodate his projections. Just before the futility of his literary efforts dawns upon him, Nicholas Urfe cold-bloodedly acknowledges that "I wanted to hurt her [Alison]" (Fowles 2004: 55). His rage against everything Alison stands for is justified through her inability to conform to Nicholas's idealizing constraints. He must thus dig deeper for a more appropriate medium onto which he can projects his idealistic impressions. The first such entity appears, as discussed in the previous chapter, upon his first contact with Greece, when Nicholas resorts to a purely metaphorical discourse in rendering the outer world, sacrificing lived experience to contemplative description: "all pure, all noble, luminous, immense, all as it always had been" and "It was like a journey into space. I was standing on Mars, knee-deep in thyme, under a sky that seemed never to have known dust or cloud" (*Ibidem*: 49). The recurrent comparison between Greece and a Circe-like feminine entity foreshadows the fundamentals of his relationship with Lily/Julie:

> I fell head over heels, totally and forever in love with the Greek landscape from the moment I arrived. But with the love came a contradictory, almost irritating, feeling of impotence and inferiority, as if Greece were a 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 her (*Ibidem*).

We therefore witness how the idealized object undergoes a metamorphosis, gaining corporeality and being literally objectified in order to satisfy Nicholas's sensorial impulses and his need to possess it. However, as Neary (1992: 130) argued, Nicholas "now encounters something that he cannot possess, cannot literalize," despite his efforts. Neary (1992: 130) goes on explaining that Nicholas "falls in love with a woman, but it is only a metaphorical woman, and the metaphor refuses to accommodate itself to literal explication".

Jung also explains this unnatural personification of the environment through the excessive identification between ego-consciousness and persona, and this sort of identification triggers the intrusion of the anima into the conscious world:

> To the degree that the ego identifies with the persona, the anima, like everything unconscious, is projected into the real objects of our environment. She is regularly to be found, therefore, in the woman we are in love with. This can be seen easily enough from the expressions we use when in love [...]. The more normal a person is, the less will the daemonic qualities of the anima appear in the

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> objects of his immediate environment. They are projected upon more distant objects, from which no immediate disturbance is to be feared. But the more sensitive a person is, the closer these daemonic projections will come (Jung 1966: 508).

Furthermore, Jung explains that "there is a strong pull towards the unconscious and, at the same time, violent resistance to it on the part of consciousness because the destruction of conscious ideals is feared" (Jung 1966: 509-510). If Nicholas the introverted sensation type responds only to the object onto which he can metaphorically project his idealistic views, for example Greece, Nicholas the extraverted sensation type responds only to an idealized reality which he can objectify in order to acquire the craved idealistic stimuli – this time, Lily/June who appears as the objectified version of Greece and is assimilated by the subject in the shape of the anima archetype. Throughout the novel, Nicholas Urfe's constant shift between metaphorizing and literalizing the phenomenal reality as well as otherness reveal his dedication to following collective principles and categorisations. He projects and seeks to possess, to introject, collective ideals that have nothing to do with individuality and are situated at the opposite of authenticity.

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The present paper aims to discuss the typological portrait of the main protagonist in *The Magus* in relation to the persona archetype, focusing on Jungian analytical psychology in terms of theoretical background. The purpose is to explore the narrative interplay at character level between the dominant psychological function, which in my contention corresponds to the extraverted sensation psychological type, as outlined by Carl Jung, and the persona archetype. I shall also analyse how, after having divested himself of the persona

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of the poet and artist, which enabled him to see the world through idealizing metaphors, the character-narrator of *The Magus* is now left with a limited means of perceiving and coping with reality, namely that of the physical senses. Nicholas Urfe can only grasp and internalize reality if it is reinforced by materialization since it is only thorough the senses that he can relate to the outer world, to otherness and the self.

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