

“Genesis is a great lie, but”

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ABSTRACT

It is increasingly accepted in textual studies that to approach the genesis of a literary work is to narrate how its textual versions were produced. In other words, understanding the development of a work encourages a reflection on the strategies used to reveal the reconstruction of its genesis for the reader. Since the main objective of genetic analysis is to trace back the processual aspects of materially recorded changes, the question arises as to how the dynamics of writing are implied by the very narration of reconstruction. In light of this discussion, the present article examines the avant-texte of John Fowles's novel The Magus, focusing on the work's closure which has repeatedly been debated by critics yet not addressed from the perspective of genetic analysis. This case problematizes the task of representing the complex genetic links comprehensively and promotes the view that the versions of the novel's ending ought to be treated as a homogenous structure rather than a set of heterogeneous units.

1. Narrativity and Genetic Studies

NARRATIVE THEORY STUDIES ARE PERMEATING AN EVER-INCREASING number of scholarly disciplines, and genetic criticism is no exception. The analytical accounts of modern manuscripts¹ are shifting towards examining how narratological devices have changed during the writing and revision stages.² The tendency to incorporate knowledge of the tools by which literary fiction is constructed into genetic analysis can be

1. The term “modern manuscripts” is used to refer to the relationship between the author and the text, which presupposes the former making changes to the latter, as suggested by the proponents of authorial philology (see ITALIA 2021).

2. An examination of Portuguese writer M. S. Lourenço's manuscripts reveals that textual variation plays a fundamental role in analyzing the function of metalepsis, as suggested by DIONÍSIO 2021. Van Hulle provided the genetic account of the formation of the epanorthosis in Beckett's writings (2014, 183–212) and the narrator in Proust's works (2004, 51–76). Moreover, cognitive narratology is thought to shed light on how the minds of fictional characters have been created by textual means (VAN HULLE 2014, 127–50).

rationalized in two ways. The first relates to a characteristic feature of genetic research: various literary disciplines (narratology being one of them) offer opportunities to interpret textual changes. Psychoanalysis, socio-criticism, and stylistics (to name but a few) are drawn upon to support the argument that philological analysis does not end with deciphering a manuscript text but also takes on the complex task of apprehending the *avant-texte*.³ Whichever literary perspective accompanies a genetic study, it allows the researcher to point out the aspects they believe are essential in shaping the reader’s understanding of the individual work’s genesis.⁴ This leads to the second argument for why narrative theory plays an important role in genetic studies. Both narrative and genetic studies are concerned with (a) representing certain events and (b) doing so in a way that affects the reader. It is assumed that the narrative form of the reconstruction of writing and revision acts prompts the reader’s imagination to interpret textual changes as interacting creative processes. In other words, the narrativity of reconstruction is the feature of analysis that shapes the processual view of genesis.

Before specifying the applications of the concept of narrativity in genetic analysis, let us briefly consider the distinction that narratology makes between *narrative* and *narrativity* (see BAL 1997, 14, 222). The former designates the result of something being narrated, while the latter shifts the focus from the narrative as a result to how it is organized. Narrativity, therefore, is a variable concept, as evidenced by the wide spectrum of definitions. The key point of discussion is whether narrativity should be considered an external set of properties that make up the narrative or

3. Pierre-Marc de Biasi emphasized that applying different forms of literary observation serves for genetic study as “a specific technique for internal and external manuscript analysis”. Rather than giving “itself over to the arbitrariness of an exclusive aim”, the reconstruction of genesis is thus approached as “a selective critical procedure” (BIASI 2004, 42).

4. The idea that the critic is responsible for the way in which the conception of the work is formed (in accordance with the reader’s engagement) comes from recent textual scholarship (see EGGERT 2019, 64–79; SHILLINGSBURG 1996, 75–92). The work’s different versions are considered to coexist simultaneously and are not prioritized by the criterion of which of them is deemed the most authoritative. This means that the academic editor is allowed “space for individual expression and [. . .] a closer integration of literary-critical thought with text-critical acts” (BUSHELL 2009, 13); hence, the general premise of textual studies (including genetic criticism) that the literary work is a mental construct, or rather, a conceptual variable (SHILLINGSBURG 1991, 41–2; EGGERT 2019, 19–34).

an inherent quality that establishes the narrative as such. Postclassical narratology tends to resolve this dichotomy by leaning towards the second assumption. As Algirdas Julius Greimas proposed, narrativity is “a structuring force that generates not simply all narratives but all discourse” (ABBOTT 2011, 8). Narrativity can be conceived as a force that disorganizes the order of discourse and re-organizes it into new orders (ABBOTT 2011, 9). Hence, it encompasses the spectrum of principles by which discourse (or aspects or parts thereof) is generated.

Various attempts have been made to apply the concept of narrativity in textual studies. Dirk Van Hulle called for a new branch of genetic criticism — genetic narratology — which would focus on examining how categories of narrative analysis (e.g., time, focalization, types of narrators) take shape across different versions (2022, 149–63).⁵ Taking a philosophical turn, Chris Gavaler and Nathaniel Goldberg (2020) identified “narrative-revisionary kinds” — conceptual types by which fictional stories are revised — and demonstrated how readerships diverge depending on the version read. Invoking narratological thought, thus, broadens our understanding of textual variation, allowing us to ask the following questions: how do the story worlds within textual versions interact? Do they supplement or cancel each other out? Do the versions produce separate story worlds, or do they constitute a multiverse within the same narrative?

The presented accounts focus on “a model of narrative analysis in terms of cultural negotiation” — a negotiation in which parties are the text, the reader, the author, and the context (VAN HULLE 2022, 163). However, we would like to specify the type of reader involved in this negotiation — or, rather, add one that constitutes a separate type — that is, the genetic critic. It may sound obvious that understanding genesis, as we have already emphasized, is bounded by critical procedures; however, things become murkier when we start asking how exactly those critical procedures organize the narrative of the reconstruction of the genesis. As Van Hulle pointed out, “every reconstruction of the genesis is a narrative in its own right” (2022, 154). However, we believe it is more accurate to say that genetic analysis is governed by the principles that narrative theory helps to elucidate, rather than being deliberately structured as a narrative *per se*. Hence, it is significant to differentiate between the narrativity of reconstruction as an organizing principle and the resulting narrative of genesis. This distinction is exemplified, rather eloquently, by the “revision

5. “Narratological genetics” dates back to the 1970s, when studies by Raymonde Debray-Genette were published; for example, see DEBRAY-GENETTE 2004.

narrative” provided in the storyboard for the edition of Herman Melville’s *Typee* and described as *provisional* (see BRYANT 2002, 164–69). As this description suggests, the narrative of reconstruction is presented as the critic’s organizing strategy rather than as a technique for fictionalizing the history of revision. In addition, João Dionísio argues that the rules of genetic interpretation (which is to be understood as a narrative) cannot “be pinpointed beforehand because they are only to be grasped in the process of text reading and document observing” (DIONÍSIO 2020, 57).

Further, we consider narrativity as an organizing principle of the discourse of genetic reconstruction. We identify no fewer than three types of such principles (narrativities) that interfere in the avant-texte analysis. The first is the narrativity of the work (i.e., literary techniques that form the narrative structure). The second is the narrativity of the changes made to the document’s text (i.e., the sequence of versions produced by the author during the stages of writing and revision).⁶ The third is the narrativity of textualizing the reconstruction of the avant-texte. This last type is conditioned by the theoretical premises the geneticist selects to govern the analysis and the interpretative steps they take when considering the previously mentioned narrativities. It should be noted that while the first two types are directly related to one another, the narrativity of textualizing the reconstruction of the avant-texte does not, strictly speaking, *interfere* with either of them. Yet, despite this complexity, we use the concept of interference to suggest that the three types intertwine in the critical account of the avant-texte as “the logical systems that organize” the set of manuscripts (BIASI 2004, 43) and to emphasize that reflection on each of the types has a nuanced effect on the understanding of the other two.

Genetic analysis, therefore, must approach narrativity with this complexity in mind. As a corollary, the same applies to the processual aspects implied by different narrativity types. That is, the three types of narrativity interacting simultaneously presuppose three types of processuality interacting as well.⁷ The first is the processuality of the text of the work (where each individual version of the narrative is dynamic in terms of syntagmatic and paradigmatic structuring). The second

6. That is, the non-coinciding narrativity of single texts as represented by the specific forms of the work—versions (cf. SHILLINGSBURG 1996, 44).

7. The distinction between the so-called creative process and processuality is made in the same manner that narrative and narrativity were discerned. While the notion of the process denotes the scope of writing and revision acts undertaken to pursue literary creation, the term “processuality” is invoked to emphasize that those acts govern and condition literary production.

is the processuality of the fluid inter-version relations. The third is the processuality of the reconstruction of the avant-texte, which involves reflecting on the critical objective of encouraging the reader of the analysis to interpret the genesis of the work as dynamic.

The question we would ultimately like to explore is how the avant-texte should be narrated to comprehensively imply the three-fold processuality. It may be useful here to elaborate on what geneticists mean when they talk about the processuality, movement or dynamics of genesis. A range of conceptions exists. For example, according to Almuth Grésillon, genetic motion can be described as dialectic. As an author composes their work, impulsive flashes of ideas intertwine with the long hours spent crafting them on paper. Building on this opposition, Grésillon suggests that the genetic critic is the intermediary who produces a conjunction between the impulse and calculation linked with the writer's enterprises witnessed in his or her manuscripts (1997, 109). Hence, genetic motion can be defined as the dialectics of a genetic scholar establishing a relationship between authorial impulse and calculation. However, characterizing the creative act as impulsive or calculated is problematic in itself.

In his seminal book *The Fluid Text*, John Bryant noted that textual scholars strive to categorize versions according to the modes of production (i.e., creation, publication, and adaptation). Yet classifying versions that constitute literary phenomena does not equate to understanding “the processes and forces (revision) that eventuate” in those versions (BRYANT 2002, 93). Admitting that “grasping the phantom is tough to do”, Bryant presents the concept of the “delta function”. In mathematics, a delta sign designates omnidirectional change (BRYANT 2002, 97). Similarly, the published version of a literary work carries the charge of revision, which can be verified by manuscript materials. In the published version, one cannot directly observe the revisional poly-potency, although this does not mean that textual variation did not occur during the production stages. Thus, when producing a critical edition, Bryant provisionally suggests marking the revised words with a delta sign. By highlighting the revised words (or sentences), the critical edition would convey the processual nature of the textual units, enabling the reader to locate and, consequently, grasp the energetic charge that the text of the work carries. Signifying the revisional quality of an otherwise “static” text is an inviting idea. However, one might argue that it stops at signaling the reader about the existence of versions and leaves the description of their becoming to the margins.

Similarly to Bryant, Sally Bushell takes on the idea of the multidimensional meaning present in the drafts of the work: “in interpreting meaning

on the manuscript page, there is often more to be gained from switching *between* different kinds of meaning that the page simultaneously holds than there is in responding to the semantic content of the words alone, or to the text as process compared with the final work” (BUSHELL 2009, 233). Unlike Bryant, instead of explaining the revisionary process as linear and sequential — that is, strictly temporal — Bushell reconceptualizes revision as “coming-into-being”. This reconceptualization is facilitated by reinforcing the focus on the manuscript’s visual (or material) identity. Bushell argues that describing the composition process involves noticing material objects (a pen, a page) employed both as extensions of the creative mind and the “present-at-hand” means by which human thought is produced, though it is separate from them (228). In turn, the two dimensions of the composition process — material and intellectual — provide the foundation for the third, “the ideality of meaning and language *beyond* the meaning of the making” (229). The processual nature of creative undertakings that Bushell has distilled is the “gestalt switching” between material and textual conceptions of meaning that exists only in the interpretative practice of versions (233). In other words, Bushell differentiates the mechanics of writing, its semantic interpretation, and critical reflection by a scholar, proposing that genetic motion ought to be grasped in the hermeneutic arrangements of the three. The minor danger of Bushell’s meticulous notion of genetic movement is that the critic constantly risks being stuck in either stage of their work: scrutinizing the parts or overgeneralizing the whole of genetic reconstruction, when the examination’s aim is, in fact, to reveal the transitioning from one to another.

The linking aspect of genetic approaches to processuality is that each assigns the reader — the scholar — the pivotal role of generating the dynamic narrative of the reconstruction of genesis. With this in mind, we return to our proposition — hypothetical rather than assertive — that the processual textual state can be accessed when the geneticist recognizes the interference between the narrativities of the work, textual changes, and reconstruction.

Genetic criticism has long examined the second type of narrativity (and, in turn, processuality) — namely, the inter-version relationships. Catherine Viollet thoroughly analyzed the corresponding and differing aspects of the *avant-textes* of Proust’s *Confession of a Young Girl* and provided a “multiple reading” account of the novel (2004). Elliott Morsia analyzed typescripts of D. H. Lawrence by conducting a parallel comparison of rewritten segments which exhibit “genetic dialogism” (2022, 141–62). John K. Young addressed “the oscillation between versions”, as suggested by Tim O’Brien, “working through several different

narrative options” (YOUNG 2021, 49–54). Finn Fordham explored the avant-texte of Woolf’s *The Waves* by tracing the narrative movements concerning self-formation (2010, 227–58). While these case studies inquire into genetic motion by investigating how the inter-version genetic links function, our concern is that focusing solely on a particular aspect of processuality reduces the complexity of reflection on the various processuality types interfering. For this reason, let us attempt to explicate the proposed model of three narrativities — and thus three processualities — intervening.

2. Narrating the Genesis of the Ending Segment of *The Magus*

John Fowles first published his novel *The Magus* in 1965 (henceforth referred to as *siglum* P1). More than a decade later, the author significantly revised and republished his work.⁸ Ever since the revised publication of 1977 (*siglum* P2), the work has borne the label of a metafiction that inquires “into the ontological status of its own processes” (HOLMES 1985, 45).⁹ The fact that the novel was repeatedly revisited is reflected in Fowles criticism, particularly in discussions surrounding the implications of the ending. The final passages of P2 are considered to have dropped the suggestion of

8. The American edition by Little, Brown and Company was published in 1965, followed by the British edition in 1966 by Jonathan Cape. The revised edition from both publishers was released in 1977. Since the only inconsistencies between the US and UK editions in the last chapter involve differences in punctuation, hyphenation, spelling, and emphasis marking (with one exception where a sentence present in one edition is absent in the other; see note 22), we will refer to the American editions when citing. See FOWLES 1965; 1966; 1977; 1977a.

9. Also see COOPER 1991, 62–63: “The Magus can [. . .] be seen as an allegory of the creative process; it investigates the way in which art is conceived, realized, and responded to, while itself constituting an accomplished work of art. [. . .] This is the specifically metafictional nature of the book: it is a text that examines textuality while consistently signposting its own.” Reception of Fowles’s works dates back to the 1980s–1990s (see ONEGA 1996) and is concentrated mainly in special issues of academic periodicals (*Journal of Modern Literature* [1980], *Modern Fiction Studies* [1985], *Twentieth Century Literature* [1996]), corpus analyses (see SALAMI 1992), and collections of critical essays (see PIFER 1986; ACHESON 2013).

resolution present in P1 and, thereby, to have intensified the indeterminacy of the closure (BOCCIA 1980, 246).¹⁰ Incidentally, general assumptions about the connections between the published versions have not sparked critics' curiosity to inquire whether the manuscript material has anything to contribute to the interpretation of the novel's ending. For this reason, let us now introduce the drafts that preceded the *bon à tirer* of the work.¹¹

When referring to the avant-texte of the ending segment, the final encounter between the protagonists, Nicholas Urfe and Alison Kelly, will be considered. This scene is depicted in Chapter 78 of P1 and P2. This last chapter had been heavily reworked in the form of Chapters 79–81 in one of the novel's earliest extant drafts: the typescript with holographic corrections (henceforth referred to as *siglum* T1).¹² Most of the changes

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10. The revisions of *The Magus* are mainly approached by identifying and comparing the thematic, semantic, and stylistic aspects of P1 and P2 (e.g., see HO 2011). These studies often conclude with interpretations of the positive/negative directions of the ending (see BINNS 1977; OLSHEN 1978, 60–61) as well as its open-ended structure (see ONEGA 1989, 66–67). Here, Wainwright's attempt to formulate the relationship between the two versions is worth mentioning. He suggested that both publications do not annul one another but rather "yield two independent fictional worlds or mimetic illusions [. . .] which collide with rather than complement one another" (1983, 113). The approach of examining separate endings of Fowles's fiction in the context of the whole work is also discussed in relation to the final chapters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (see SCRUGGS, 1985).
 11. The earliest and, to our knowledge, the only mention of Fowles's manuscripts concerned the variant endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the typescripts of which are deposited at the McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa (see MANSFIELD 1980; SULLIVAN 1980; SMITH 1988). Although these accounts highlight the textual changes recorded in the typescripts, they do not apply a systematic approach to genetic research. As for *The Magus*, in 1991, the Harry Ransom Center (University of Texas at Austin) obtained literary materials from Fowles, including the drafts of the novel that we focus on in this article. Since their acquisition (see SIBLEY 1996), the manuscripts have received no attention in terms of genetic analysis yet.
 12. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 3, pp. 877–913. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. The sheets were corrected during typewriting and contain added typewritten insets and changes made by hand (using black-ink and blue-ink fountain pens, black-ink felt-tip pen, graphite pencil, and blue and black pastel pencils). The number of these changes and their rough manner suggest that this typescript is a draft in which at least eleven stages of revision can be reconstructed, although the precise boundaries of these stages cannot

were accepted, that is, typewritten into the new sheets under Chapters 78–80, where further modest additions and deletions were made by hand. This second extant draft typescript with holographic corrections (henceforth referred to as *siglum* T2)¹³ was titled by Fowles as the “first ending”.¹⁴ It is worth noting that the two documents (T1 and T2) contain revisions around the similar idea of the work’s closure. The third extant draft of the novel’s ending is the typescript with holographic corrections where Chapter 78 is significantly reworked (henceforth referred to as *siglum* T3).¹⁵ It was titled by the author as the “final ending”.¹⁶ Hence, the genetic relation between the T1, T2, and T3 drafts is that the latter contains the narrative idea identifiable with the one in the published versions (see Fig. 1).¹⁷

be accurately determined. Fowles marked the pagination of the draft in the following way: initial numeration added in black-ink fountain pen at the top of the page; subsequent deletion and re-numeration with blue pastel pencil; and additional numeration in graphite pencil on the left margin linking T1 to T2 (see note 14). When citing, the intermediate numeration in blue pastel pencil (marking T1 pages only) is referenced.

13. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, pp. 1134–73. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. The changes on the sheets were made during typewriting and by hand (black-ink fountain pen and black-ink felt-tip pen; a typewritten inset is added on page 1161; one inscription is typed over on page 1169). Presumably, at least four stages of revision can be reconstructed. When citing, the original typewritten pagination is referenced.
14. This inscription in blue pastel pencil appears on one of the last pages of Chapter 77, in the top right corner of page 1131. Presumably, the title was added by Fowles during one of the revision stages. (Since the chapter divisions differ across versions, the inscription in Chapter 77 is considered here, even though the present article focuses on the textual material of Chapter 78).
15. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, pp. 1132–45. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. The typewritten papers were revised during typewriting and by hand (red-ink fountain pen, graphite pencil, and blue pastel pencil). Presumably, at least six revision stages are identifiable.
16. The inscription in blue pastel pencil appears on the first page of Chapter 78, in the top right corner of page 1132. Presumably, the title was added by Fowles during one of the revision stages which might have coincided with the addition of the “first ending” inscription in T2 (see note 14).
17. The archival descriptions suggest that the changes made in the texts of the three typescripts are attributable to Fowles himself. However, it is known that *The Magus* was revised by the author’s wife, Elisabeth Fowles, and editors Tom Maschler (Johnathan Cape Limited) and Ned Bradford (Little, Brown and

versions of the last segment of the work	1st ending	2nd ending	3rd ending
documents	typescript with holographic corrections [siglum T1]	typescript with holographic corrections [siglum T3]	revised publication of <i>The Magus</i> in 1977 [siglum P2]
	typescript with accepted changes from T1 and further holographic corrections [siglum T2]	first publication of <i>The Magus</i> in 1965 [siglum P1]	

Figure 1. Versions of the ending segment of *The Magus* and the corresponding documents.

Company). Thus, a more detailed study is needed to evaluate the attribution of the specific cases of revision acts. With this in mind, we rely on three premises that support the argument for holographic corrections within the fragments analyzed in the following sections. First, it is generally assumed that Fowles produced the manuscripts by typing the text himself (three of his personal typewriters are preserved at the Harry Ransom Center), corroborating the fact that the typewritten insets in the manuscripts are holograph additions. Second, the graphological similarity of handwriting found throughout the three typescripts. Third, in the extant editorial notes to *The French Lieutenant's Woman* kept at the McFarlin Library, University of Tulsa (see FOWLES, 1977b), Elisabeth Fowles and, presumably, Fowles's editor at the time typewrote their suggestions on separate sheets. This fact led us to assume that Fowles's readers might not have made direct interventions in the manuscripts during the draft stages of writing. Hence, except for cases where punctuation or individual characters were changed, and given these three premises and the fact that revision stages in the typescripts cannot be discerned in all cases, we will refer to each of the typescripts as three homogenous sets of holographic corrections.

The dating of the three typescripts is not without its complications either. Neither the manuscripts nor the collection inventory provide any clear indications of exact dates (see Sibley 1993; we extend our thanks to Elizabeth L. Garver at the Harry Ransom Center for her relentless help with accessing and navigating Fowles's papers). However, it is assumed that *The Magus* was Fowles's first ever written novel, which means it predates his first published work, *The Collector*, in 1963. Thus, the *terminus ad quem* for the three typescripts is prior to 1965, the year P1 was published.

It should also be noted that P2 was prepared by making changes to a printed copy of P1 and an additional typescript. Since these two documents were not publicly accessible at the time of writing this article (having been auctioned by Sotheby's), the versions that interposed P1 and P2 are not considered here.

2.1. Processuality implied by the narrativity of the work

In the last chapter of the revised edition, Nicholas reflects on his expectations for seeing Alison, his lover, with whom he is angry for having betrayed him: “I had imagined too many ways of our meeting again, and yet none like this” (P2 647). As much as this remark indicates the character’s astonishment, it also alludes to the seminal feature of Fowles’s narrator: that of explicating various scenarios into which the novel’s events might have developed.¹⁸ Nicholas had “expected some spectacular re-entry, some mysterious call, a metaphorical, perhaps even literal, descent into a modern Tartarus” (647; P1 596),¹⁹ yet he first sees Alison in the park, the “most banal of scenes, this most banal of London, this reality as plain and dull as wheat” (647; P1 597).

This contrast between Nicholas’s expectations and reality creates an effect of surprising simplicity, which is both a compositional and a linguistic aspect of the meeting scene. As T3 reads,²⁰ Nicholas was getting lost in his book *when*: “In the outer seat opposite, diagonally from me. ¶

18. A prominent example is the three endings of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969), commonly known as traditional, happy, and unhappy endings. Though not without its own complications, a glimpse into Fowles’s perspective on his works’ finishing line is offered by the following anecdote: “In response to a gentle letter from a New York lawyer, dying of cancer in a hospital, who said he very much wanted the couple [Nicholas and Alison in *The Magus*—DG] to be reunited, Fowles wrote back, ‘Yes, of course, they were.’ On the same day, he got a ‘horrid’ letter from an American woman who angrily demanded, ‘Why can’t you say what you mean, and for God’s sake, what happened in the end?’ Fowles replied curtly: ‘They never saw each other again.’” (STOLLEY 2016).

19. In cases where a quote appears in both P1 and P2, we will reference both but cite the latter. This approach inevitably raises a teleological implication, but when the narrative structure remains unchanged, the two American editions differ mainly in punctuation and spelling, with our preference given to the second edition.

20. Since the general conception of the ending in T1 and T2 coincides, sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the present article will primarily focus on T1 and T3 (the latter representing an alternate narrative path for the ending). Thus, we eliminate T2, the intermediate version, from our analysis. T1 has been chosen because the numerous microrevisions concerning the conception of the novel’s ending are of particular importance and are largely absent in T2 (which merely contains a transcript of the accepted changes made to T1).

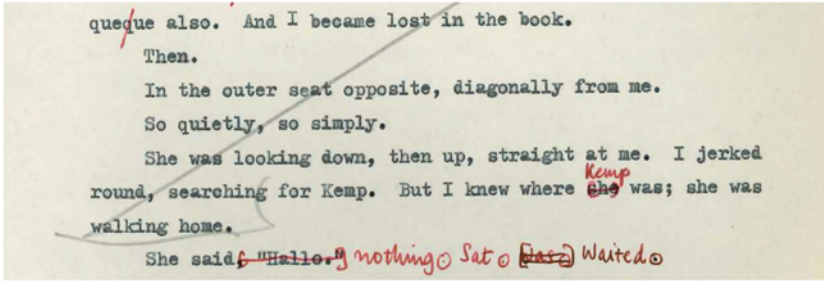


Figure 2. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T3. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, p. 1134. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

So quietly, so simply. ¶ She was looking down, then up, straight at me.”²¹ (See Fig. 2). The next paragraph contains the deletion of Alison saying “Hello” and the addition that emphasizes her silence instead.²² This revision act underscores the idea that the encounter’s unexpected, even uncanny, casualness is carefully constructed.

As dull as the setting of the encounter may appear in the published versions and T3, it does not mean that a descent into a modern Tartarus did not occur at all.²³ In T1, the meeting scene is depicted with Nicholas shining a torch on Alison, who, dazzled by the beam, fails to meet his gaze (see Fig. 3, below). Attributes such as the torch, the sarcophagus, the alcove, among others used in T1, suggest that the meeting scene in the early drafts significantly differed from the version in the later drafts. T1 and T2 actually explore the possibility of the encounter that T3 and printed editions merely allude to — the *literal* descent into Tartarus. Thus, the

21. Pilcrows are used in the transcription to mark paragraph endings in the typescript.

22. The sentence in focus is absent from the first American edition (see FOWLES 1965, 596), yet it appears in the first British publication (see FOWLES 1966, 607). Since this is the only instance in Chapter 78 where a sentence-long paragraph is present in one edition but not in the other, the omission may have been a proofreading error.

23. Paraphrasing Aristotle may be productive in understanding the discussion of how Fowles plays with the boundaries between fiction and reality: “[. . .] there is nothing to prevent some actual events being probable as well as possible, and it is through probability that the poet makes his material from them” (HALLIWELL 1995, 61, 63).

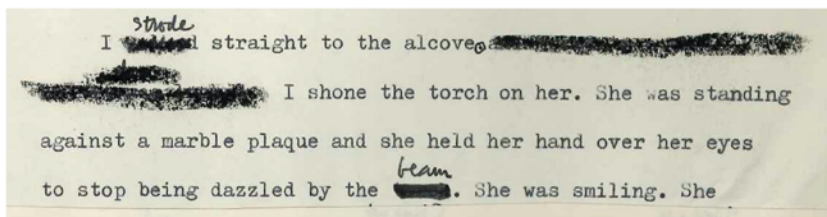


Figure 3. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T1. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 3, p. 896. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

ending segment in T1 and T2 focuses on the characters trying to resolve their relationship and navigate the labyrinth of the mystical space.

The dramatic space-time in T1 and T2 creates an effect of artifice and exaggeration, in relation to which the content of the dialogues appears more down-to-earth and the characters' human-like qualities more credible. In contrast, T3 and the published versions introduce the fictive as an expected setting for the scene. For this reason, the characters' genuine acts are portrayed as unbelievable: Alison "was *cast* as Reality" (647; P1 597; emphasis — DG). The scene's fictive and real aspects thus shift depending on which version's narrative rules are taken as the starting point for interpretation.

Since the internal compositions of the versions exploit the play with these oppositions, let us consider them as heterogeneous textual states. An intricate question to ask then is how the building up of mimetic dilemma (real vs. fictive) within each of the documents takes effect, thereby creating suspense between versions.

2.2. Processuality implied by the narrativity of revision

The spatiotemporal transformation between T1 and T3 is substantial, yet some phrases in both versions share synonymous or even identical wording. T3 contains the passage in which Nicholas forgives Alison for all of her "bloody tricks" and seeks to learn the reasons behind them (see Fig. 4, below, underlined in blue). Nicholas's condition for his kindness ("I forgive you, *but*") is significant here, as the exact same phrasing is found in T1 (see Fig. 5, below, underlined in blue). In the latter typescript, however, forgiveness means something quite the opposite of a gesture of benevolence: the passage emphasizes the intensity of Nicholas's anger

toward Alison for her actions, including the current one — bringing him into the macabre space of modern Tartarus. In other words, the same phrasing functions differently in different typescripts depending on the fragment it appears on.

From now on, let us conceptualize the wording that coincides across versions to a certain degree as *anchor phrases* and assign them two significant functions. First, the anchor phrases indicate the semantic ideas Fowles was working on to find an eloquent expression. Klaus

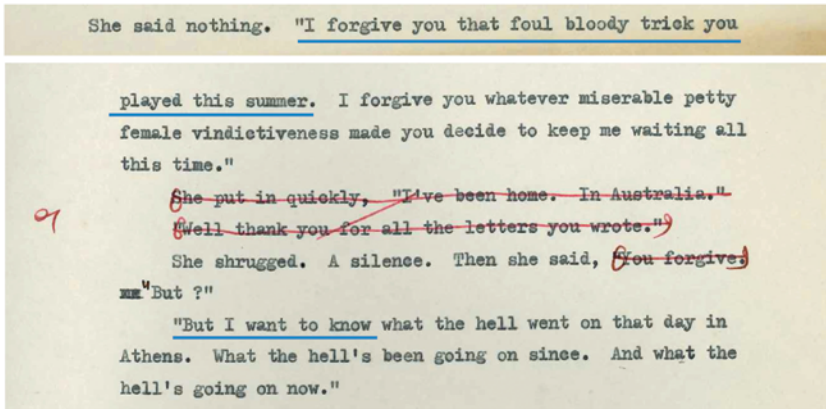


Figure 4. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T3. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, pp. 1135–6. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

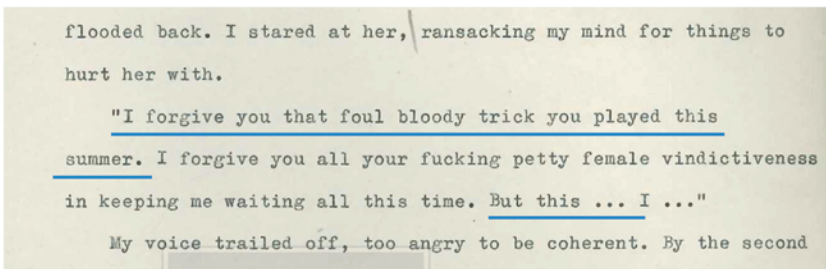


Figure 5. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T1. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 3, p. 897. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

Hurlebusch has noted the compositional method of genetic anticipation and subordination, which shows “where the work’s core segments lie” (HURLEBUSCH 2000, 88). It should be mentioned, however, that the metaphor of anchor phrases is invoked with an emphasis on the means of how differing textual units are linked throughout the manuscripts in terms of changes in narrative structure. We do not aim to argue that the revised segments are essential to the formation of the text of the work. The anchor phrases may not necessarily correspond to the textual material that concerns the narrative’s core aspects. Rather, the proposed concept invites us to approach linguistically and semantically similar phrases as textual units that once served as aids for revision.

The second function of anchor phrases, recognizable across versions, is to signal macrogenetic revisions, in addition to the microchanges made to preceding or following sentences. In other words, anchor phrases denote textual fragments within typescripts that evolved around a particular idea and were consequentially either expanded or compressed in length during the writing and revision stages.²⁴ Since the scope of anchor phrases and textual fragments they link is not limited to a specific number of sentences or paragraphs, their boundaries are defined by the extent of the narrative idea being revised. Given that there are no fixed criteria for determining the beginning or end of a narrative idea, its textual limits are subjectively defined by the critic and serve to aid the narration of the reconstruction of genesis.

24. A considerably similar revision mechanism was discussed by Elliott Morsia in the context of problematizing the genetic approach to D.H. Lawrence’s manuscripts. These manuscripts illustrate a case of revision where one textual segment is modified through rewriting: “[. . .] despite multiple rewritings only a minute amount of revision is actually carried out *within* specific versions. The rewriting is therefore at a more macro-level, with ‘revision’ taking place between the different, segmented versions; the resulting passages are themselves in a sense ‘unrevised’” (MORSIA 2022, 190). This method of writing is conceptualized as dialogical and is invoked to critique the view of text “as a constructed object and the process of writing as a construction project” rather than a series of relationships between self and other (MORSIA 2022, 211). Although the concept of genetic dialogism is worthy of interest, the notions of textual construction *versus* creative flux do not, in our opinion, contradict one another. The dialogical nature of the author revising their manuscript does not deny, if not complement, the way the texture of the written text is being constructed. Be that as it may, the dialogical composition of Fowles’s versions resonates with the concept of anchor phrases.

One of the reworked narrative ideas traceable by the anchor phrases in Fowles's avant-texte concerns the shifting psychological images of the characters. In both T1 and T3, there is a paragraph where Nicholas idealizes Lily (a woman he is attracted to) only to distort the image he has of Alison. The similar wording functions as an anchor sentence linking the two versions of the paragraph (see text in boxes in Fig. 6 and Fig. 7, below).

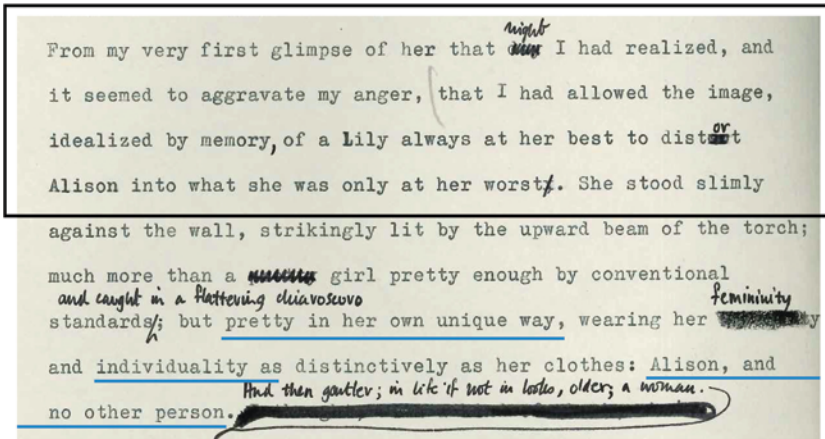


Figure 6. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T1. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 3, p. 902. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

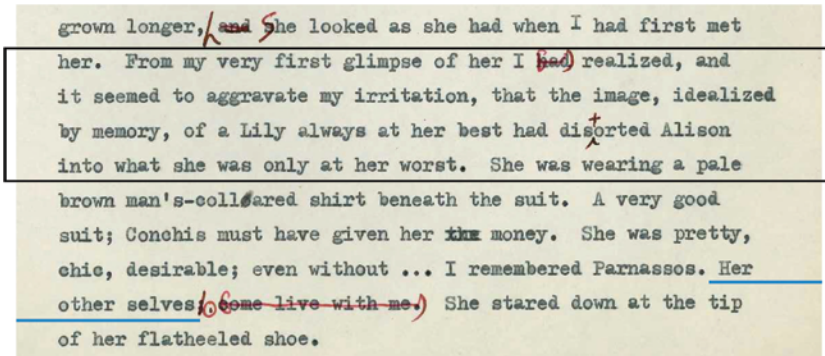


Figure 7. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T3. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, p. 1135. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

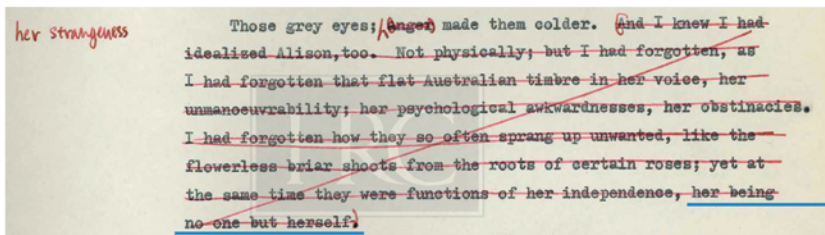


Figure 8. John Fowles, *The Magus*. Fragment of T3. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, p. 1136. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London.

The micro-changes following these anchor sentences further specify Alison's portrait in three ways. In T1, Nicholas sees Alison as someone like "no other", with her uniqueness emphasized as a feature connoting distance and independence (see Fig. 6, above, underlined in blue). This characteristic is modified in T3, where Alison loses her initial individuality and is described as possessing "other selves" (see Fig. 7, above, underlined in blue). A few passages later in T3, her features are further reworked in a newly added, though ultimately deleted, paragraph (see Fig. 8, above). In this paragraph, Alison is portrayed as a blend of her uniqueness (as indicated in T1) and the "other selves" (as seen in T3; see Fig. 8, underlined in blue).

The textual fragment that explores Nicholas's image of Alison may be summarized as undergoing a transformation across the typescripts: initially, her image is rigidly antagonistic ("Alison, and no other person"); then, it becomes vaguely favorable ("her other selves"); and finally, it is rendered ambivalent ("<her psychological awkwardnesses, her obstinacies [. . .] yet [. . .] her being no one but herself>").²⁵ The rewritten sentences that followed the anchor phrases imbue the textual fragments depicting Alison's image with contradictory mimetic potential. Thus, the meaning dualization (unambiguous *versus* obscure) intensifies when the heterogeneous sets of changes (versions) are interpreted together. As a corollary, understanding the mechanism behind the shifting meanings in Fowles's typescripts creates a sense of psychological and textual instability at work.

Therefore, in reconstructing the avant-texte, the concept of anchor phrases ought to be approached as an analytical tool. This direction of thought suggests hypothetically suspending (though not entirely annulling) the chronological aspect of revision. If the changed textual fragments were tracked by anchor phrasing, their contradicting quality (in our case, the

25. Angle brackets are used to mark deletions in the document.

shifting psychological features of the characters) would remain evident in the course of interpreting these changes, regardless of which version was produced first at the moment of writing. Consequently, this approach not only liberates the chronological manner of reading the typescripts in the order they were produced from the implication of teleology but also validates the practice of reading the typescripts “backwards”. The question then arises whether the versions revealing dichotomies of the narrative should be considered as heterogeneous elements of the text of the work or as forming a complex textual unity.

2.3. Processuality implied by the narrativity of the avant-texte reconstruction

Given the revision mechanism that involves shifting textual meaning by creating contradictions, how can it be conceptualized to represent the ending’s many-fold textual state? To address this, the four compositional elements of the final chapter’s last segment will be analyzed (see Fig. 9, below).²⁶ The versions of these elements expose three types of contradictory relationships, which will come into focus when dissecting the segment’s transcriptions (see Fig. 10, below).

-
26. For the convenience of navigating through the main text and the figures of the present article, T1 and T3 will not be included in further analysis. They have been eliminated on the grounds that changes recorded in T1 were accepted and transcribed to T2, and T3 contains the same conception of the closure as the first edition it precedes. It should also be noted that in the stages of pre-publication, P1 and P2 were revised not by Fowles alone. As mentioned earlier, at the time of writing this article, there are no intermediate documents accessible that would prove the editorial changes. Hence, in this section, the text of T2, P1, and P2 will be examined, first, focusing on the fact that the chosen versions represent three differing conceptions for the novel’s closure, and second, treating P1 and P2 as inclusive heterogeneous structures of the ending (despite any possible non-authorial changes), with the aim of the analysis being to inspect their inter-version dynamics.

For the same reason of avoiding overcomplicating the analysis, we do not include the novel’s actual final lines, that is, the citation from “Pervigilium Veneris” (“The Vigil of Venus”): “cras amet qui numquam amavit / quique amavit cras amet”; “Let those love now who never lov’d before, / Let those who always lov’d, now love the more,” (trans. by Thomas Parnell). The position of the hypograph varies across the typescripts and printed editions (appearing either immediately after the last paragraph or on the following blank page). Including it in the study would necessitate addressing problems of paratextuality, which lie beyond the current scope of this article.

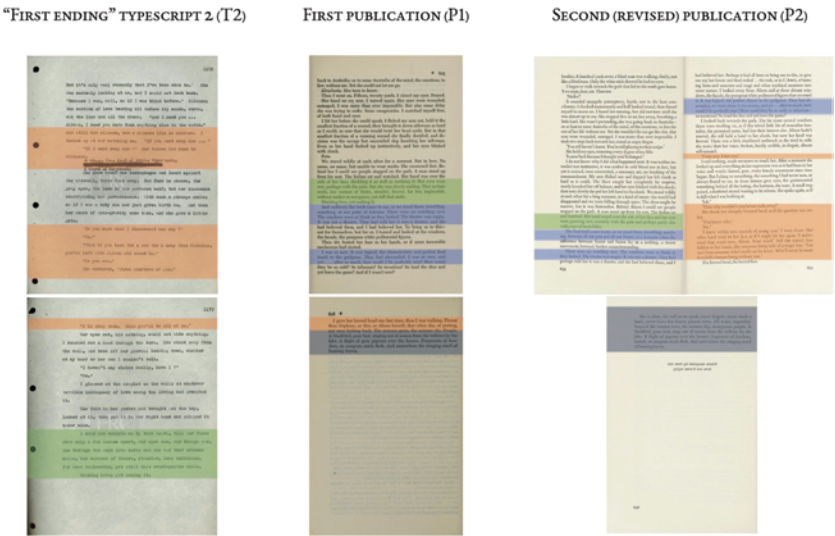


Figure 9. The provisional schema of the versions of the four compositional elements of the last segment within the final chapter of *The Magus*. From left to right: 1) Excerpt from T2. John Fowles Papers. Box 28, Folder 4, pp. 1172–3. Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin. Reproduced by permission of the Estate of John Fowles c/o Aitken Alexander Associates Limited, London; 2) Excerpt from P1. *The Magus*, 1965, Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, pp. 605–06; 3) Excerpt from P2. *The Magus: A Revised Version*, 1977, Boston/Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, pp. 654–56. The colored boxes indicate four textual fragments, each revolving around an individual semantic idea identifiable throughout the versions because of the anchor phrases. The boundaries of the fragments were decided based on which textual material of the ending segment would involve the fewest complications when explaining the reconstruction of genesis.

“FIRST ENDING” TYPESCRIPT 2 (T2)

[X] I looked up at her watching me. “If you went away now... / x.”

“If I went away now?” Our voices had sunk to whispers.

<“I think my heart would break.”> A silence. Some kind of begging beggar words. I stared at the ground.

[–]

“Do you know what I discovered one day?”

“No.”

“That if you take the c and the h away from Nicholas, you’re left with Alison all mixed up.”

“So you are.”

She murmured, “Three quarters of you.”

“I’ll drop them. Then you’ll be all of me.”

[–]

[Y] I drew her towards me by both hands, till our faces were only a few inches apart, our eyes one, our beings one, one through the cold iron bars and she had that archaic smile, her variant of theirs, steadier, less malicious, far less implacable, yet still that cruel-gentle smile.

Mocking love, yet making it / y.

FIRST PUBLICATION (P1)

[Y] Her eyes were wet, perhaps with the pain. But she was slowly smiling. That archaic smile, her variant of theirs, steadier, braver, far less implacable, without malice or arrogance, yet still that smile.

Mocking love, yet making it / y.

[Z] And suddenly the truth came to me, as we stood there, trembling, searching, at our point of fulcrum. There were no watching eyes. [...] The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre.

[–]

I was so sure. It was logical, the characteristic and perfect final touch to the godgame. They had absconded. I was so sure, and yet... after so much, how could I be perfectly sure? / x. [–]

[X] I gave her bowed head one last stare, then I was walking / x. Firmer than Orpheus, as firm as Alison herself, that other day of parting, not once looking back. [M] The autumn grass, the autumn sky. People. A blackbird, poor fool, singing out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of gray pigeons over the houses. Fragments of freedom, an anagram made flesh. And somewhere the stinging smell of burning leaves / m.

SECOND (REVISED) PUBLICATION (P2)

[Y] Her hand stayed over the side of her face and her eyes were growing wet, certainly with the pain and perhaps partly also with a sort of incredulity / y.

[Z] The final truth came to me, as we stood there, trembling, searching [...].

There were no watching eyes. [...] The theatre was empty. It was not a theatre. [...] It was logical, the perfect climax to the godgame. They had absconded, we were alone. I was so sure, and yet... after so much, how could I be perfectly sure? / x.

[–]

[X] “I hate you. I hate you.”

[–]

“Then why wouldn’t you let me walk away?”

/ x.

[–]

“You know why.”

“No.”

“I knew within two seconds of seeing you.”

[–] “You can’t hate someone who’s really on his knees. Who’ll never be more than half a human being without you.”

[–]

[M] She is silent, she will never speak, never forgive, never reach a hand, never leave this frozen present tense. All waits, suspended. Suspend the autumn trees, the autumn sky, anonymous people. A blackbird, poor fool, sings out of season from the willows by the lake. A flight of pigeons over the houses; fragments of freedom, hazard, an anagram made flesh. And somewhere the stinging smell of burning leaves / m.

Figure 10. The abridged transcriptions of the four compositional elements of the ending segment within the final chapter of *The Magus* (as marked in Fig. 9). In the main text of the article, the four fragments are referred to as follows: x fragment (marked in orange), z fragment (blue), y fragment (green), m fragment (grey).

[. . .] signifies the omitted textual units of any length (a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph) that differ semantically to a higher degree across the versions and therefore mark preliminary boundaries of the fragments chosen for analysis; <. . .> signifies deletions, **bold** indicates additions, underlining represents anchor phrases (formalization of which is provided after slashes).

Psychological (right/wrong) dilemma clashing with the mimetic (real/fictive) one.

Identifiable in all versions, the x fragment (see Fig. 10, marked in orange) is linked by three anchor phrases (underlined): “if you went away now . . .” (T2), “I was walking away” (P1), and “why wouldn’t you let me walk away” (P2). Semantically, these phrases signal the character’s confusion about his need for another person: (1) Nicholas wants Alison to stay; (2) he is leaving her, or (3) she is stopping him from leaving. Nicholas’s indecision about staying or going is nuanced by shifts in tense and modality of the

three phrases and changes in the surrounding sentences, which add up to creating tension between the versions of the fragment. Therefore, the anchor phrases, along with the differing preceding or following sentences, can be approached as variables. The psychological shifts within the x fragment are thus marked as x_1 (T2), x_2 (P1), and x_3 (P2) (see Fig. 10, indicated after a slash following each underlined anchor phrase).

The anchor phrase and the micro-revision it prompted in the case of x_1 appear at the start of the ending segment of T2. In contrast, x_2 and x_3 are positioned differently in the compositional structure of P1 and P2: x_2 is condensed and incorporated into the last paragraph of P1, while x_3 is expanded in P2, right before the final passage. Consequently, these variables also signify the change in the extent to which the anchor phrase and its surrounding sentences were reworked, as well as the altered fragment's location within the compositional structure of the ending segment. Integrating both the semantic and structural nature of the x fragment thus means treating it as a complex inter-version structure: $x_1 \leftrightarrow x_2 \leftrightarrow x_3$ (where double arrows signify the two-way relationships between the versions of the fragment, suggesting that genetic links are to be established and differentiated through the interpretive efforts of the equation's reader).

Another interpretative angle that aids the reconstruction of the x fragment involves the textual changes made to the z fragment (see Fig. 10, marked in blue). Absent in T2, the z fragment is added in P1 and P2 and centers on Nicholas's confusion about experiencing reality. The anchor sentences concerning the character's puzzlement are contradictory even in their syntactic structure: "I was so sure [. . .] how could I be perfectly sure?" (henceforth formalized as z_1 , z_2).²⁷ The semantic conflict the z fragment conveys is positioned differently within the ending segment: in P1 and P2, the z fragment is interposed by other textual units (see Fig. 10, indicated by [. . .]). A notable characteristic of this change in the fragment's location is that the fragment was interspersed differently in different versions.

Nicholas's doubts depicted in the z fragment add to the obscurity created in the x fragment, where the protagonist grapples with his need for Alison (her presence/absence). Hence, the textual changes made to the x and z fragments, as well as the compositional positions these fragments occupy

27. Although the linguistic form of the anchor phrases may coincide, the micro-changes surrounding them in most cases differ. For this reason, variables that mark textual fragments linked by analogue anchor phrases are indexed with different numbers.

in T2, P1, and P2, concern the question of what is morally right *versus* wrong, while also colliding with the mimetic enigma of real *versus* fictional (or true *versus* false). In other words, the relationship between separate textual fragments within a particular version suggests that the internal contradictions of these fragments are in conflict: $x_1 \leftrightarrow z_1 \mid x_2 \leftrightarrow z_2 \mid x_3$ (the vertical line signifies the contradictory relationship between textual fragments, each of which carries its own internal oppositions).

Overlapping psychological and mimetic oppositions.

A different textual construction is revealed when the formation of the γ fragment (see Fig. 10, marked in green) is examined. Here, psychological and mimetic dilemmas overlap within the structure of the same fragment. In T2, Nicholas embraces Alison, and as Fowles put it, their beings become one; in P1, Alison gives Nicholas a peculiar smile through her tears after he hits her; P2 depicts Alison's genuine pain as she is on the verge of crying because of Nicholas's violent act.²⁸ Thus, two possibilities for the narrative to unfold are formed: characters embracing one another (T2) or standing apart, hurt (P1, P2). The different modalities of their relationship culminate into the anchor phrases that close the γ fragment: "Mocking love; yet making it" (T2, P1) and its variation in P2, "a sort of incredulity" (all three are formalized as y_1, y_2, y_3).²⁹

Whether the characters compromise or not, the semantic and syntactic forms of the anchor phrases affirm both possibilities (mocking, *yet* [T2, P1]; *a sort of* incredulity [P2]). In other words, the anchor phrases denote Nicholas's doubts about the moral fairness of the relationship and its

28. James R. Lindroth suggested reading the act of Nicolas's slapping Alison as a part of the theatrical architecture of the novel's ending (1985, 58). As Lindroth noted, in P1, the slap is scripted by Conchis, the novel's Divine providence, and this script is kept hidden from Alison. In turn, Nicholas's violent and mischievous move takes on the meaning of revenge. In P2, Alison has been made aware of the script involving the slap, and Nicholas's act of revenge can be interpreted as simulated (66). Even though Conchis is absent in both scenarios, the protagonists in P1 nevertheless act under his influence, which suggests to the reader the impossibility of choice. When the characters start to improvise Conchis's script in P2, they take the risk of framing the scene with "authentically felt love and hate" (67).

29. Although the concept of anchor phrases is built on coinciding wording across versions, in this case, the third phrase is considered an anchor phrase due to its semantic rather than linguistic similarity to the first two.

sincerity, pointing to his more sophisticated contemplations in the ending segment, namely, questioning the boundaries between the real and the fictive. In this way, a double contradiction is created within the γ fragment. The fragment's position in the ending segment also varies across versions: in T2, the γ fragment closes the novel; in P1, it functions as the starting point for inserting additional paragraphs; and in P2, it is condensed. The reconstruction of the revision of the γ fragment thus suggests a contradiction that overlaps with the inter-fragment opposition between the x and z fragments: $x_1 + y_1 \leftrightarrow y_2 + z_1 \mid x_2 \leftrightarrow y_3 + z_2 \mid x_3$ (the plus sign marks the relationship between fragments within a particular version and denotes the succession of genetic links).

*Resolving versus unresolving the closure of
the narrative.*

It seems useful to raise the question now: what does the reconstruction of the formation of paradoxes within and between the fragments reveal about the textual state of the ending segment? To answer this, an examination of the very last fragment of the novel's published versions — the M fragment (see Fig. 10, marked in grey) — will be of use. In P1, the M fragment depicts the oddness of the sense of freedom that strikes Nicholas as he begins to walk (supposedly) away from Alison; in P2, the textual unit is reworked so that the “fragments of freedom” are infused with the foreboding of hazard and the unsettling “frozen present tense”. The closure of the M fragment in P1 and P2 climaxes in the anchor phrase: “the stinging smell of burning leaves” (m_1 , m_2). Given that T2 ends with the γ fragment rather than the M fragment, the three versions of the ending segment suggest three possibilities for the novel's narrative to unfold: T2 implies that Nicholas may possibly stay with Alison following their embrace; in P1, Nicholas is likened to Orpheus, hinting at the possibility of the characters parting; finally, P2 introduces the addition of “all waits, suspended,” leaving no explicit conclusion. Hence, taken together, the three versions of the closure present a final contradiction — resolving *versus* unresolving the relationship that constitutes the axis of the novel.

As the ending segment focuses on generating paradoxes (Nicholas's confusion about what is right *versus* wrong, unambiguous *versus* obscure, real *versus* fictive), the final paradox (resolved *versus* unresolved closure) can be read as a question of whether the tension of accumulated contradictions is to be released or further intensified. In other words, the

T2 ending

P1 ending

P2 ending

$$x_1 + y_1 \leftrightarrow y_2 + z_1 \mid x_2 + m_1 \leftrightarrow y_3 + z_2 \mid x_3 + m_2$$

Figure 11. Formalization of the reconstruction of the genesis of the ending segment.

process of reconstructing the genetic links leads to the assumption that the confrontations in the novel’s ending level out, and the very mechanism of suspension formation gets suspended. This, in turn, provides further impetus to speculate on the contradictory nature of the heterogeneous understanding of the versions.

We will address the imperative to examine versions as a homogenous continuity³⁰ by invoking the mathematic formalization developed throughout this section. Namely, we propose reading the reconstruction of the genesis of the four textual fragments as an equation. The idea behind this formalization is that the equation can be read as fueling the implication of the three-fold textual state of the ending segment. While the narrativity of scientific discourse presents its own challenges, which are beyond the scope of this study, the general notion that mathematical formalization can be *read* as a narrative (see ANDERSEN, 2022) supports this way of conceptualizing the reconstruction of genesis. In other words, the formalization should not be seen merely as a stencil outlining the genetic links but as a means of comprehending them through the act of reading the equation (see Fig. 11).

We would like to suggest one possible reading of the given equation. First, attention should be brought to two-directional arrows, as they are used to stimulate the interpretive movement of going forward and backward within the equation at the moment of reading it. As interpretive

30. We draw a distinction between the heterogeneous and homogenous textual structures on the grounds of Gabler’s conception of the synchrony and diachrony of the text of the work: “[. . .] the work may be said to comprise all its authorial textual states. By such definition, the work attains an axis and extension in time from the earliest draft to the final revision. Its total text presents itself as a diachronous structure correlating the discrete synchronous structures discernible [. . .]. It is thus a kinetic system of signification whose dynamics revolve on the variant. The variant, far from being an extraneous irritant, becomes an integral textual element of pivotal significance in the textual totality of the work.” (GABLER 1984, 309).

movements oscillate between the versions and their relational markers, genetic relationships are, in turn, encouraged to be viewed in line with the nature of the ongoing reflection — as a form of movement. A dynamic reading of the equation instigates the interpretation of what is being read as a processual phenomenon. This implies a kinetic nature to the three-fold textual structure. Perceived as a movement, this textual structure begs the question of what it signifies: each version is viewed in relation to the preceding or subsequent versions rather than as a contradiction to the preceding one. In this way, versions are understood as forming an insoluble textual state in which contradictory semantics are neutralized. In other words, interpreting the textual structure as a sequence of genetic motions is no longer restricted to reducing it to one of the versions or settling on the individual meanings that they suggest (such as questioning whether the ending of *The Magus* provides any clarity on whether characters re-unite or part ways, or which of the protagonists is cast as reality or fiction, *et cetera*).

Conclusion

The complex narrative of the modern novel presupposes the intricacy of strategies used to analyze the text's genesis. In the case of the ending of *The Magus*, the reconstruction of revisions reveals how the net of contradictions concerning the protagonist's understanding of right *versus* wrong, unambiguous *versus* obscure, real *versus* fictive, is woven together with the dilemma of resolved *versus* unresolved closure of the narrative. The three-fold analysis — focusing on the processuality of the work, the processuality of revision, and the processuality of the reconstruction of the avant-texte — suggests that genetic links within and between individual versions can be conceptualized as forming a homogenous textual structure. When this textual structure is understood as kinetic in both structural and semantic terms, heterogeneous textual constructions are suspended. This perspective allows us, for a moment, to view textual units as contradicting, complementing, and otherwise interacting as an agile unity. Although it never existed as a singular entity, this kind of textual state can still be conceived as probable and possible by the reader of the avant-texte. Thus, the interpretive nature of examining the genesis of a literary work is a self-reflective speculation, or, as Fowles would put it, a lie, “but it is also a great poem” (FOWLES 1969, 128).

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