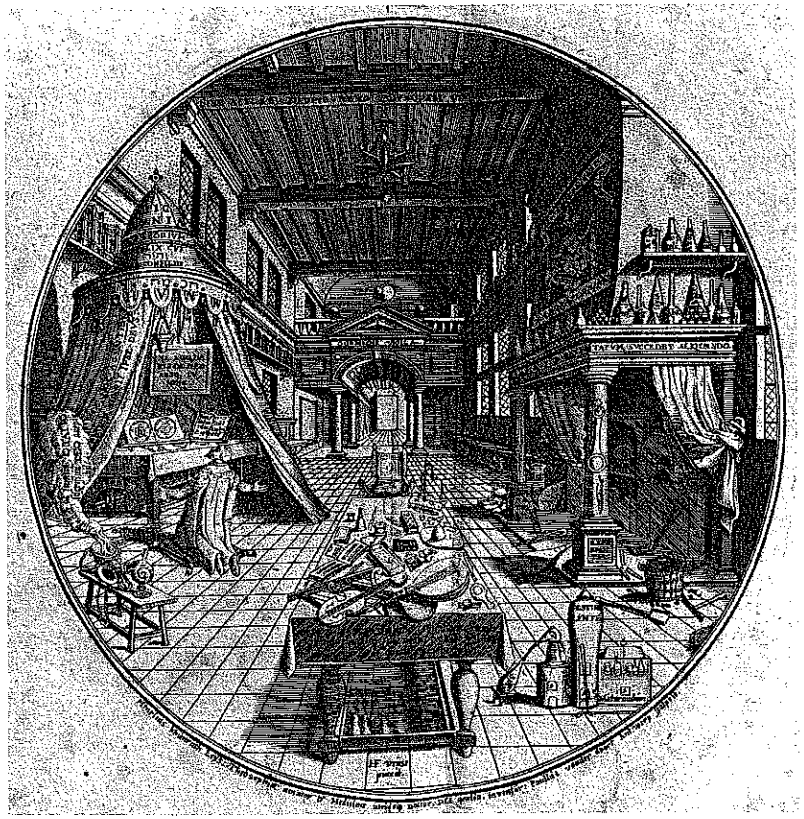

Laboratory and Oratory. Heinrich Khunrath, *Amphitheatrum Sapientiae* (1609).

Mystical Metal of Gold

Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture

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Introduction: Recent Scholarship in Alchemy and Hermeticism

In 2004, the anniversary of an event of some importance passed quietly and with little recognition on the part of the larger scholarly community. Forty years earlier, in 1964, Frances Yates's *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* was published in England (by Routledge), in Canada (by the University of Toronto Press), and in the United States (by the University of Chicago Press). Thereupon, many young graduate students, aspirants to Renaissance positions in university departments of history, English literature, and philosophy, were awakened by a sudden and urgent need to familiarize themselves with a host of unfamiliar authors, works, and philosophical traditions that Yates's book served to exhume: Ficino, Campanella, the *Pimander*, the *Prisca theologia*, magia and cabbala. Conscientious students leaped to the opportunity to buy *Giordano Bruno* in hardcover (and later, *The Art of Memory*, *Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, and all the rest) and proceeded to read Yates avidly—if not too critically. Many, at the time, were caught up in the Yates "furore," bridling only when reflecting on some of her more audacious claims: Could it really be that John Dee was a "very clear example of how the will to operate, stimulated by Renaissance magic, could pass into, and stimulate, the will to operate in genuine applied science"?[1]

I invoke the example of Dame Frances and her famous book, not to indulge in nostalgia, but because its publication in 1964 turns out to have been an important "moment" (as we now say) somewhere near the beginning of modern interest in the figures, works, and topics central to the study of hermeticism. It provides a useful point of departure for both a highly selective discussion of the present state of hermetic studies and as a way of introducing the sixteen essays in this new collection, *"Mystical Metal of Gold": Essays on Alchemy and Renaissance Culture*.

16

Representations of Renaissance Hermetism in Twentieth-Century Postmodern Fiction

György E. Szönyi

I

The lure of esotericism and occultism is clearly present in our postmodern culture. The most visible forms of this attraction—apart from horoscopes in tabloid newspapers—are literary fiction and feature films ranging from "high art" to various forms of popular culture. In this paper I am not going to deal with film or with cheap "airport paperbacks," although their examination would by all means be an important aspect of the sociology of late modern civilization.[1] My study intends, rather, to draw attention to the fact that even contemporary mainstream fiction often delights in recycling occult and esoteric themes. In this genre we mostly find (pseudo)historical (meta)fictions which tend to locate their plots and heroes in the time of the Renaissance. One should not be surprised by this, since this period means for us "the birth of the individual" that also fostered "the Age of the Great Magi." The Renaissance brought about the work of Ficino the humanist inventor of magic with talismans, Trithemius the theoretician of angel magic, Paracelsus who looked at medicine as a magical practice, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa who created the monumental encyclopedic handbook of magic, and John Dee who devoted over thirty years of his life to learn Adam's primordial language in order to communicate directly with the angels and even with God! Next to these *magi* we should also remember two other groups who represented the occult tradition, the astrologers and the alchemists. The latter, especially, made a deep impact on the learned as well as the popular imagination of the Renaissance, and they continue to be favorite literary characters.

To sum up: there is hardly a leading scientist or natural philosopher from the sixteenth- and early seventeenth centuries who was not suspected of and charged with practicing illegal, secret sciences. One could develop a list from Copernicus, through Giordano Bruno, and beyond to the founder of modern rationalism, Descartes, who in his youth looked enthusiastically for the Rosicrucians in Germany. Encyclopedists and pansophists like Johann Heinrich Alsted,

educators like Comenius, natural scientists like Newton were all "under the influence,"[3] and we should not forget such powerful Renaissance literary characters as Prospero or Doctor Faustus, who were likewise masters of the secret sciences.[4]

To understand modern novels that place their occult themes in the Renaissance requires some knowledge of the period. It is perhaps safe to claim that the heyday of magic was the sixteenth century, an era still absorbed in the medieval world picture, filled with angels and spirits based on the theories of the Great Chain of Being and the infinite web of correspondences, and searching nostalgically for the lost Garden of Eden and the vanished Golden Age. At the same time, strikingly new ideas and attitudes were entering the picture: for instance the dream of the Renaissance magi about the possibility of *exaltatio*, that is the deification of man through the power of sacred, white magic, or their ambition to communicate with the Creator after whose image humankind had been forged. At the same time the nascent scientific revolution promised emerging possibilities for transmuting and subduing nature. The Renaissance represented a unique blend of tradition and innovation, individualism and cooperation, lofty ambition and sacrilegious greed. No wonder that this period—in many ways the cradle of Western modernism—is still so popular among artists in general and fiction writers in particular, who, developing stories set in or touching upon the Renaissance can draw all kinds of morals from it.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries unfolded another story that Keith Thomas in his groundbreaking study has called "the decline of magic."[5] The new rational philosophy and experimental science, step by step, dismantled the medieval world picture and disproved the theories of magical correspondences, astrological influences, and material transmutations.[6] At the same time, philology and historical studies broke up the fine network of myths and legends that had woven together the venerable line of *prisca theologia* from Hermes Trismegistos and Moses, through Zoroaster and Orpheus, to Pythagoras and Plato.[7] The two lines of scientific and cultural history seem to converge in a seamless "grand narrative" about the great change; however, in fact, the situation was quite different.

It may seem surprising that centuries after the philosophical and scientific foundations of the magical world view were radically undermined, magic is still alive in its myriad forms: from ritual-bound secret societies to intellectual schools, to varieties of popular culture that offer specialized bookstores, horoscopes in illustrated magazines and tabloid papers, and an extraordinary variety of cultural representations, such as fiction, films, classical and rock music, artworks, and the like. How can we, if at all, explain the lure of the occult and the esoteric in our postmodern, industrialized world? I will return to this question in the conclusion of my paper; now I will only refer to the engaging book of Czeslaw Milosz, Polish Nobel laureate, who in his *The Land of Ulro* (1984) marvelously demonstrated how at the very moment of the birth of rationalism and the scientific revolution a fear of and dissatisfaction with these developments was also born, and by returning to the *philosophia perennis* they created an ever flourishing counter-culture. According to Milosz—and this has also been

brilliantly demonstrated by Allison Coudert, Marsha Keith Schuchard, Arthur Versluis, and others[8]—in the Age of Enlightenment the greatest representatives of this trend were Swedenborg and William Blake.

Here I would like to point out that the modern novels I am going to discuss approach Renaissance esoterism from various standpoints. Some of them represent "outsider" opinions and their authors, such as Umberto Eco, were/are nonbelievers in the occult, so this theme is used by them as a metaphoric or parabolic device. Others approach the occult as more or less insiders, speaking as mystics (Peter Ackroyd). There are considerable overlaps between the two groups, however; for example none of the writers can (or wants to) entirely avoid "the lure of the occult," something that theoreticians of the fantastic call "the uncanny."[9] Consequently, the satiric voice of Chaucer (*The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*) or Ben Jonson (*The Alchemist*) is missing from today's fiction. There is another common motivation in all works to be discussed: without exception, they give an account of a certain dissatisfaction with linear, rationalistic, scientific—one might suggest the term "mainstream Western"—thought. At the same time, most of them are distrustful of the esoteric, too. This is why these works are so ambiguous, a feature that may be their main attraction for today's readership and literary critics alike.

II

The first literary representations of magic and the magician date from ancient times. Magic as an archetypal Western myth, however, was invented in the Renaissance. Among many fascinating works of fiction, two dramatic characters emerged as the extreme exploiters of esoteric knowledge and power: Shakespeare's Prospero and Marlowe's Doctor Faustus. At first sight they are complete opposites: one is a benevolent, wise, self-correcting and religious white magician; the other is arrogant, greedy, and ready to sell his salvation for the sake of the black art. In fact, somewhere deep inside they are close kin: both are highly ambiguous, enterprising and daring; both experiment with dangerous powers and balance on the edge of the abyss between pious ambition and hubris. One can regard them as prototypes for a typology of magical aims, methods, and fates of magicians: a still valid typology, as we can see by examining contemporary fiction dealing with esoteric themes.

The modern history of literature and the occult started with the novel of Karl Joris Huysmans (1848–1907), titled *Lè-bas*—meaning "down there"—written in France in 1891. This novel worked out many of the literary devices that still characterize contemporary, postmodern fiction touching upon the occult. The most prominent feature of the novel is that its double plot fuses a story line taken from the past with another contemporaneous to the writing of the work. In this case a tale of nineteenth-century Satanists is interwoven with a life of the medieval Satanist Gilles de Rais (1404–1440).[10]

The main characters of the novel—Durtal, the biographer of de Rais; Des Hermies, a psychiatrist well versed in homeopathy and occult lore; and the

learned astrologer Gèvingey—are all hermit-like figures who separate themselves from the stream of modern life and take pleasure in the cult of the Middle Ages. Durtal's inclination for things mystical and illicit is kindled by a strange woman, Mme. Chantelouve, who by day is an unsatisfied bourgeoise but at night becomes a succubus and a participant in the Black Mass celebrated by the diabolic Canon Docre. Although at the end Durtal becomes disappointed and digusted with the black practices, an important subtext of the novel suggests a general mistrust in the period's positivistic rationalism, too. As the psychiatrist character of the novel admits:

> What can be believed and what can be proved? The materialists have taken the trouble to revise the accounts of the sorcery trials of old. They have found in the possession-cases the symptoms of major hysteria . . . . There [still] remains this unanswerable question: is a woman possessed because she is hysterical, or is she hysterical because she is possessed? Only the Church can answer. Science not.[11]

A double-decker plot, the two lines of which at some point mystically and inexplicably merge, and a philosophy, which is ironical and critical about the occult, and at the same time sceptical and mistrustful about pure rationalism are the hallmark of the genre that developed in the footsteps of *Là-bas*. Let me briefly mention three examples from the first half of the 20th century.

Somerset Maugham's *The Magus* was written in 1908, and its story was inspired by the then all too well-known English magus, Aleister Crowley.[12] The main characters of the book are Arthur Burdon, a practically-minded surgeon, absolutely sceptical about the occult; Margaret Dauncey, his fiancée is an innocent, beautiful girl. There is Susie Boyd, Margaret's roommate, less attractive but sensitive and intelligent. Dr. Porhoët is a stock character, a doctor who takes some historical interest in hermeticism, who has lived in the East and seen many strange things, even published a book on Paracelsus. And there is the magician, Oliver Haddo, an English magnate, totally imbued with magical practices, a strange mixture of charlatan and adept. His goal is to produce a homunculus, and his purposes are vile. Arthur's scepticism is strongly emphasized at the beginning of the story, an attitude in sharp contrast to his later encounters with the supernatural. From a dramaturgical perspective, it is also necessary to create tension between him and Haddo, as this conflict brings about the catastrophe of the book: out of revenge, Oliver bewitches Margaret, seduces, then marries her, only to ruin Arthur's life and use the unfortunate woman for his experiments.

The case of Oliver Haddo introduces a new element to the typology of the Magus. While Huysmans drew a parallel between modern black magicians and a medieval Satanist, Haddo is, on the one hand, contrasted with Faustus who represents the black magician, on the other with Paracelsus, who apparently never came under evil domination and whose aims were always pious.[13] The vacillation between scepticism and the lure of the occult is brought to a perfectly

ambiguous climax when Arthur recognizes in one of Dr. Porhoet's obscure stories his own childhood esoteric experience.

All the literary devices surveyed so far are uniquely blended and presented in an entertaining as well as a philosophic way in a Hungarian novel which, despite its being translated into English, has been undeservedly neglected on the world literary scene. The writer, Antal Szerb, was an excellent literary historian, and his novels touch upon the important intellectual issues of his age, the period between the two World Wars. The hero of Szerb's *The Pendragon Legend* (written in 1934),[14] János Bátky, a Hungarian scholar who enjoys some inheritance, settles down in London near the British Museum and immerses himself in the most exciting (and apparently impractical) subjects. Dr. Bátky is like Des Hermies and Dr. Porhoët, but—in my opinion—he is more lively. He has amusing and not at all innocent adventures with women and also likes to go to evening parties. This is how he meets the earl of Gwynedd, who becomes the most important character of the story.

There are at least a half dozen layers in the novel, blended with elegant craftsmanship: the earl is working on some mysterious biological experiments which are distinct reflections of the ambitions of the Paracelsians to create an artificial man, the homunculus. In the meantime he is entangled in a crime story: his ex-fiancée and her associates try to kill him in connection with an inheritance case. Bátky is caught up in a whirl of events that progress from everyday mystery to mystical terror: it turns out that the old Pendragon castle on the neighboring hill hides the tomb of Christian Rosenkreutz, the legendary founder of the Rosicrucians. The legend, well known from the early seventeenth-century manifestos, is retold by the Hungarian novelist and transposed to Pendragon. According to this version, the founder of the Brotherhood was an ancestor who is finally awakened in the early twentieth century and saves the life of the present earl from the murderers. But he also wants to accomplish the Great Work, which has come to a halt. As he feels abandoned by the heavens, according to the obligatory pattern, he decides to turn to evil forces. He performs diabolic magic and sacrifices to Satan the wicked ex-fiancée of the earl. In a trance, Bátky witnesses the whole action, which concludes in a devastating appearance of the Devil. All this drives the Rosicrucian ghost to final desperation, and he kills himself. What makes this novel really enjoyable is that the reader cannot discover whether the author is serious or whether he is just making a literary-intellectual joke, a parody of the genre. Like the *Chymische Hochzeit* of Johann Valentin Andreae,[15] *The Pendragon Legend* leaves its audience in the thrill, awe, and excitement of uncertainty.

My third example is *The Angel of the West Window*, written in 1927 by the Austrian Gustav Meyrink (1868–1932), author of the famous *Golem*. The latter was devoted to Rabbi Löw, the leader of the Jewish community in Prague in the time of Rudolf II, who created a clay monster and brought it to life. *The Angel of the West Window* is also set in the time of the Renaissance, at least partly, and its hero is John Dee, the English mathematician and magus, astrologer to Queen Elizabeth I. Meyrink's novel initiated a series of fantastic narratives that

up to the present have been exploiting Dee's diaries and the facts of his life for investigations in mystical-psychological fiction.[16]

Dee's life, his scholarly-esoteric works (such as his *Monas hieroglyphica*), and his records of the angelic conversations carried out with the help of his magical "shew-stone" and the "scryer" Edward Kelly, contain all the basic elements that constitute almost all modern fiction using occult themes.[17] Dee was a highly pious, devout Christian, whose program of occult philosophy and experiments would serve his exaltation or union with his Creator, according to Pico della Mirandola's program as laid down in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man*. At the same time he was not devoid of secular ambition either, and his geographical and other projects for Elizabethan British imperialism (using Frances Yates's term)[18] always left a place for himself in the leadership of those plans. Dee appears to be a white magus who sometimes stumbled on the verge of hubris-inspired diabolical experiments; he was a hermit, but also a courtier-intellectual, fashioning himself in the patronage system and among humanist circles. Last but not least, the notorious episode of "wife-swapping" with Edward Kelly during their stay in Bohemia in the 1580s even brings in the element of sexual magic, so popular in today's esoteric discourse.

The main character of *The Angel of the West Window*, Baron Muller, is a late descendant of John Dee, now living in Central Europe. He, while studying and translating his ancestor's spiritual diaries, re-experiences, in fact re-lives the Doctor's whole life in an ever increasing psychotic trance. The novel is by no means a faithful historical narrative and in this respect prefigures postmodern historical metafiction. Meyrink definitely wanted to create something more contemporary, which he accomplished, as Robert Podgurski observed, "by hitting on the idea of interweaving the story of a living, contemporary figure with that of old, 'dead' Dee."[19] The fictitious life story of Dee—based on historical facts but at the same time radically altered—is masterfully amalgamated with that of Baron Muller, who is connected to his ancestor's world not only through family ties but the system of reincarnations in which there are two types of creatures: those who are born again but do not remember their former lives and those who are eternal, bringing their accumulating consciousness from body to body. Muller belongs to the first category but, by the end of the novel, is gradually transmuted into the second.

Many of Dee's fictitious acquaintances are such eternal creatures and pop up in the life of Baron Muller, too. Dee's wise and benevolent assistant Gardener returns as Prof. Gartner, Muller's ex-school friend, a chemist-turned-alchemist. Dee's wife, Jane Frommond, turns up as Mrs. Fromm and becomes Muller's housemaid. They are the good party, who engage in an overwhelming psychomachia for the fallible soul of Dee, respectively Muller. On the dark side are the kindlers of wordly ambition, such as the heretic rebel, Bartlett Green, who makes Dee believe that his destiny is to become the king of Britain on both sides of the Atlantic and also rule the newly established Greenland. The Russian merchant, Mascee, who passes Saint Dunstan's magic book and the powder of the Red Lion to Dee, via Kelly, is reincarnated as Sergei Lipotin, the antiquarian who emigrated from Russia because of the Bolshevik revolution. In

any case, the most powerful danger is the dark, irresistible, vampire-like sucking and musk-smelling female seduction, so graphically described by all the aforementioned male novelists, supported by Freudian concepts and visualized by decadent, post-*Jugendstil* imagery. The reckless Queen Elizabeth who brings about the downfall of Doctor Dee is the reincarnation of the mythical, black mother, Isais, as well as the Asian princess, Assja, who represents temptation incarnate for Baron Muller.

The main ambition of all the dark forces is to obtain the magic spearhead of Dee's Celtic ancestors, the Hoel-Dats Clan, which is the key to eternal life and wisdom, the ultimate power. Dee possesses the antique weapon but loses it when he enjoys a sexual-magical union with Elizabeth, apparently a succubus conjured up by Bartlett Green. Muller regains it, and this time he manages to defeat the black Isais and the power of the flesh, thus transmuting himself into a Golden Rose Brother who becomes the alchemist of the other world and enjoys an androgynous union with the heavenly queen, the true Elizabeth. The concluding apotheosis of the novel, however, is counterbalanced by an ironic flashback to the turmoil of the earthly existence left behind, thus leaving the dumbfounded reader in a vacuum where layers of history, fiction, reality, esoteric experience, and psychosis seem hopelessly entangled.

If we construct a typology of the above novels, we can say that Maugham's *The Magus* and Szerb's *The Pendragon Legend* were written more from an outsider's viewpoint. Nevertheless, although irony and scepticism prevail in these works, they cannot entirely ward off the seductive power of mystical lore. On the other hand, while Huysmans's and Meyrink's novels more directly communicate a believer's identification with the occult happenings in their plots, at certain points the echoes of disappointment and disillusion can be felt. From a literary point of view, it requires no detailed explanation to understand that it is very difficult to represent metaphysical or parapsychological phenomena in such a way that while preserving artistic coherence the plot is continuously suspended on the border between the believable and incredible, reality and illusion. No doubt, all writers so far discussed did their best to realize this goal.

III

If we turn now to recent novels with occult-esoteric themes referring to the age of the Renaissance, we realize that they belong to a generic category, called *postmodern historiographical metafictions*. The scope of this paper does not allow detailed definitions; here I offer four quotations to pinpoint what I am talking about.

To begin, today's historical novels are usually labelled "postmodern," which is characterized by Stephen deCarmo as follows: "Postmodern literature is self-referential, intertextual, category-defying, pastiched, not snobbish, it gets fact and fiction all mixed up."[20] Since everything is category-defying in postmodernism, quite naturally fiction becomes "metafiction": "fictional writing self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order

to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality," notes Patricia Waugh.[21] When postmodern fiction turns to historical topics, the result is historiographical metafiction, a strange product that "through its play upon 'known truth' . . . questions the absolute 'knowability' of the past, specifically the ideological implications of historical representations. In its process of redefining 'reality' and 'truth' historiographic metafiction opens a sort of time tunnel."[22] According to Linda Hutcheon's classic definition, historiographic metafictions are "novels that are intensely self-reflective but that also both reintroduce historical context into metafiction and problemitize the entire question of historical knowledge."[23]

It is easy to see that occult-esoteric themes are very suitable for historiographical metafictions: they question the relationship between fiction and reality as well as the knowability of the past; they are self-reflexive and get fact and fiction all mixed up. Referring to the novels discussed above, I venture to say that Szerb's *The Pendragon Legend* and Meyrink's *The Angel of the West Window* are direct ancestors of these historiographical metafictions, and the germ of all the postmodern characteristics can be found in them.

One of the prototypes of recent esoterically-oriented historical novels is Umberto Eco's celebrated fictionalization of all systems of Western occultism and secret societies, *Foucault's Pendulum*, dating from 1987.[24] This work is characterized by a radically subversive and ironic use of historical *sujet*.

As one would expect, the work operates with an intricate system of multiple plots and planes of time. The primary storyline involves three editors of the distinguished but slightly eccentric publishing house, Garamond: Jacopo Belbo, who spent his life among partisans during the Second World War; Diotallevi, a passionate researcher of the cabala who claims to be Jewish although he is not; and the youngest, Casaubon, the narrator, an author of a thesis on the Knights Templar. His intellectual formation took place during the student revolutionary movements of 1968 but later he converted his neo-leftist sympathies to an interest in the social history of the occult. Casaubon is invited to work for the Garamond house because they specialize in publishing books on various occult topics, often by enthusiastic amateurs who are willing to sponsor their own books, but obviously reviewers and copy editors are needed to bring those manuscripts into acceptable form. One day a retired soldier, Colonel Ardenti, brings in the results of his lifelong research according to which the Templars were not entirely eliminated in the fourteenth century; instead, they reorganized themselves in the form of a secret society and forged a plan to take over the world, provided certain conditions were met. On the basis of Ardenti's manuscript the three editors make up a practical joke, they invent a *Plan*—in fact a conspiracy-theory—which involves all the traditions of esoteric lore and the major secret societies, such as the Templars, the Propelicans, the Rosicrucians, the Freemasons of England, the Jesuits, the Russian Tzar's secret police, Hitler and the Nazi party and many others. According to the Plan, the Templars survived the purge and schemed on secretly; as a document "proves," they set up a schedule of meetings every 120 years (cf. the Rosicrucian legend: "post 120 annos patebo"), organized by different societies: Portugal (1344), England (1464), France (1584), Germany (1704), Bulgaria (1824), Jerusalem (1944). The Plan hints that the secret of the Templars was their knowledge about the *Umbilicus Telluris*. Placing the proper map under a Pendulum in a proper place at sunrise of the summer solstice one finds the umbilicus telluris at a point on the map where the Sun's first rays intersect with the pendulum. He who controls the umbilicus telluris rules over the world: he has power over telluric currents, can cause earthquakes, sink continents, and perform other wonders at will. Of course, the proper map has to be found and one should also know where to set up the huge pendulum. The jocular editors cleverly leak out information by letting Aglié, a very knowledgeable gentleman and presumably the reincarnation of the Count Saint-Germain, know about the Plan, and, indeed, soon it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy as the existing secret societies seize on it and begin searching for the map and the other requisites.

The core idea of the novel can be better understood if we contextualize it with Eco's scholarly works written about the same time, especially *The Limits of Interpretation*,[25] where he criticizes the hermetic way of seeing with its system of arbitrary correspondences, resulting in uncontrollable and unlimited semiosis. In *Foucault's Pendulum* there is more than one witty example of such analogical symbolization: for example, when Aglié explains the numerological connections between the proportions of the Great Pyramids and a lottery kiosk, or when Casaubon's girlfriend, Lia, develops a comprehensive number symbolism of the body, or when from a driver's manual Belbo offers an interpretation of the automobile engine as the ultimate metaphor of Creation:

> Any fact becomes important when it's connected to another. The connection changes the perspective; it leads you to think that every detail of the world, every voice, every word written or spoken has more than its literal meaning, that it tells us of a Secret . . . . Last night I happened to come across a driver's manual. Suppose the automobile existed only to serve as metaphor of creation? (377–78)

The inventors of the Plan test their success by making up a nonexistent secret society, *TRES* (*Templi Resurgentes Equites Synarchici—Synarchic Knights of Templar Rebirth*) only to be shocked to learn that the TRES already exists and is led by Aglié. From this point on, their fate is transformed from a self-fulfilling prophecy into a self-timed explosive device. Diotallevi becomes terminally ill and soon dies. Belbo becomes entangled in a destructive and dangerous love affair with a femme fatale, Lorenza Pellegrini, but his idol is seduced by Aglié. In a fit of jealousy Belbo tries to fool his adversary by claiming that he has the missing map, only to trick Aglié into trapping him and taking him to Paris where TRES is having a grand convention in the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, next to the famous Pendulum of the eighteenth-century physicist, Foucault. In a final act of bravery Belbo refuses to tell that there is no map; in consequence TRES sacrifices him by hanging on the Pendulum. Casaubon witnesses the execution from a secret hiding place, the periscope, and so escapes

that meeting but knows that TRES will soon find him. He travels to Belbo's weekend cottage and patiently waits for his murderers to arrive.

It is interesting that most critics of the novel have found it funny, "full of good jokes at the expense of exploitative publishers and pompous intellectuals" (Jonathan Coe), "done with wit and learning" (John Bayley), "wit and learning informs every page" (Victoria Nelson); however few have noticed in it the dark tone and pessimism about any likelihood of reconciling reason and faith, intellectual investigation and occult wisdom. In Eco's interpretation, the twofold perils of Western thought are the narrow-mindedness of rationalism and the blinding zeal of esoterism. In his book, *The New Middle Ages*,[26] Eco himself called attention to one more frightening connection, that between the power-thirst of perverted *exaltatio* and totalitarianism that he diagnosed as proto-Fascism. Hungarian critics have shown exemplary sensitivity to this aspect. In connection with *Foucault's Pendulum*, a cultural historian, Gábor Klaniczay wrote that "occultism is the metaphor for modern man's aspirations to world power," and another critic, Gyula Rugási noted that "occultism is *that* most easily practicable form of ruling the world that even a retired bookkeeper can entertain while sitting in his armchair at home."

To be sure, Eco's novel has no extensive subplot set in the Renaissance, although one of the important secondary characters in it is John Dee from the time of Queen Elizabeth and Shakespeare. Eco even includes the hieroglyphical monad, which—since everything corresponds to everything else in the world—"looks like a pendulum" (418). The main reason I include *Foucault's Pendulum* in this essay is that it offers an encyclopedic survey of issues and trends in esoterism while it preserves a sarcastic and sceptical approach in spite of the fact that—especially through the character of Aglié—it presents a very authentic and serious treatment of the occult philosophy. According to my typology of esoterically-oriented novels, Eco represents the "outsider-observer" critic's perspective.

One of Eco's closest followers in this generic approach is the German novelist, Helmut Krausser. His first international success, *Melodies*[27]—which was translated into thirteen languages, but not English, alas—did not achieve the intellectual complexity of *Foucault's Pendulum* but in terms of craftsmanship, in my opinion, it surpasses its master.

As in the early twentieth-century historical novels, we find here two plots, one set in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the other is contemporary to the time of writing. There is no single narrator but the main hero of the contemporary line is Alban Täubner, a young travel writer and photographer who, due to a mismatch in Siena, Italy, gets entangled in an extraordinary and horrifying story of research and scholarly rivalry. The object of this academic enterprise is the fate of some magic melodies that were composed by Castiglio, a Renaissance humanist and renegade medical doctor-turned-magus. After various adventures and travels (which included meetings with Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and Johannes Trithemius) Castiglio ends up at the mini-court of Gianfrancesco Pico in Mirandola and becomes the prince's alchemist. His real research project is to compose magical music that can transfer power and compel

humans to follow the intentions of the magus. Because of a mishap Castiglio and his assistant, Andrea, have to leave Mirandola (they failed with their music to force a pious local girl to make love to the lustful old prince). Having taken shelter in the Abbazia of Pomposa, Castiglio finally manages to complete seventeen magical melodies.

With these in their bags and in their hearts, the magus and assistant proceed toward Ravenna, but, unfortunately, on the way some vagabonds kill Castiglio. Thus, Andrea becomes the inheritor of the melodies. At the market place in Ravenna he starts singing them and the result is miraculous healings. The city is turned upside down and, without hesitation, the Inquisition arrests Andrea as a dangerous heretic; he is soon executed. Before the fatal morning the abbot of Pomoposa visits him in the prison and Andrea gives him the scores of the melodies.

From this point on the Renaissance story line becomes scattered: it is hinted that the melodies are discovered and used by Palestrina, Gesulado, and Allegri. Finally they come into the hands of Pasqualini, a seventeenth-century castrato singer-composer who became a terrible pervert and used the melodies to accompany his dreadful, sadistic human sacrifices and dark "Orphic" rituals performed in the cellar of his house in Rome. The Renaissance/Baroque storyline suggests a moral that is quite common in esoterically-oriented narratives: the noble idea of magical deification, or *exaltatio* becomes corrupted and due to hubris and thirst for power the magus becomes a monster.

The modern plot mirrors the Renaissance one. The serious historical research pursued by high-minded academics turns into a crazy competition and race for glorification among some scholars: Jan-Hendrik Krantz, the Swedish professor of mytosophy; Nicole Dufrés, the feminist historical psychologist; Doctor Mendez, the frustrated anthropologist; and Lupu Stancu, the mafioso and bibliophile, ruthlessly struggle with each other for every document and piece of evidence in order to reveal the story of the magic melodies. Similar to *Foucault's Pendulum*, the narrative turns into a multiple nightmare, and Täubner finally finds himself locked up in a madhouse. This outcome leaves the reader in utter uncertainty about the reality of the previous happenings of the novel, thus fulfilling the requirements for historiographical metafiction quoted above.

Apart from the engaging plot and powerful characters, the construction is also the work of a virtuoso. In addition to the two intertwining story lines, "documents" are inserted to create multiple layers of action and narration. We learn about Gesualdo's life from a fictitious manuscript research paper of a German professor that had been stolen by Krantz from the widow of the renowned scholar. On the other hand, Pasqualini's life and perverted Orphic cult are revealed through his own autobiography (*Vita Pasqualini*), and the self-apologetical narration which step by step sheds light on the monstrosity of that character utterly shocks the reader. Although the plot framed in a madhouse and other features of the novel suggest that this is the work of an outsider sceptic, the mystery of the melodies and Andrea's miracle in Ravenna remain unsolved, reminding us of the fact that the "uncanny" accommodates no rational approach.

My next example, Patrick Harpur's *Mercurius—The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*,[28] takes us one step nearer the insider position of the adept. This novel again fuses several temporal planes. In the most contemporary line, the narrator, P., receives a package from his former girlfriend, Eileen, which contains her diary and a packet of curious alchemical materials. The book is basically the publication of these writings.

The novel uses the "trick of documentarism," something that has been well known as a literary device since the eighteenth century. There is a matter-of-fact first person introduction written by P. (page numbering here is in roman numerals) in which he gives exact details about his receiving the materials and his motivations for publishing the manuscripts. He also presents interpretive remarks that prepare the reader for the upcoming unusual and powerful story.

The introduction begins with a quotation in which Hermes speaks in the first person: "Know this: I, Mercurius, have set down a full, true and infallible account of the Great Work. But I give you fair warning that unless you seek the true philosophical gold and not the gold of the vulgar . . . *read no farther* lest I prove fatal to you." The perplexed reader immediately receives a logical explanation, although this does not mean that all disquiet will be dispelled:

> These disconcerting words were written on the first sheet of paper I took from one of two plastic bags which had been left on the doorstep of my London flat, 7 April 1983. [The person who left those bags was the narrator's ex-girlfriend, Eileen, 33, a year older than Narrator, they were contemporaries at Cambridge University.] The papers were written in two hands: one belonged to Eileen, the other a country vicar who calls himself 'Smith'. Smith was a modern practicioner of alchemy and his writing included an account of the alchemical *Magnum Opus*. Eileen's writings begin as (unposted) letters to me, but following her discovery of Smith's manuscript, they change into something like a commentary on this alchemical operation. (x–xi)

P. then explains that since he had read Jung's alchemical studies he could make some sense out of the manuscripts; however, after "I have edited these texts, I am less satisfied with Jung's explanation. Quite apart from the fact that he is not concerned with the practical side of alchemy, but only with its subjective effects, he often begs more questions than he answers. *It begins to look as if alchemy is a larger and more profound phenomenon than psychology can embrace—a whole science of the soul, in fact, which has yet to be adequately realised*" (xii, emphasis mine).

It is impossible here to summarize this 500–page novel in which a multiple plot unfolds whose threads are finally untangled in the highly dramatic denouement. One time-plane features Eileen, who, after having broken with P., quite accidentally ends up in a small village in the country, decides to rent the Old Vicarage and—as a self-healing therapy—writes some scholarly books there. This is how she discovers the manuscripts of Smith, who was the vicar in this village in the 1950s, and it is the old house where he carried out his alchemical

experiments to create the Work. As the publisher's blurb sums up: "As she penetrates farther into the alchemical labyrinth, she is haunted both by her own history and by that of her neighbours, the menacing Mrs. Zetterberg and the disfigured Pluto—and, finally, by the enigma of Smith himself."

As P. correctly writes in the introduction, "The book is far from being all hard work—more than half the entries entertain us with the ordinary lives of the authors"—except these lives can hardly be called ordinary even if they were spent in an uneventful godforsaken village. The extremely well-represented human drama makes this novel a masterpiece, in my opinion; however, one must not forget its engaging and mystical philosophical message, either. Although alchemy is explained and interpreted in a very scholarly manner throughout the book (through Ellen we receive notes on scientific history and explanations from structural anthropology), the introduction anticipates the "insider's" message of the book: "Something quite unexpected emerges from these writings taken as a whole: the sense that alchemy is the supreme expression of a world-view which, superior in many ways to our own, the book goes a long way towards reconstructing. More than that, *the book can be seen as a plea, and a warning, not to neglect our deep-rooted spiritual heritage*" (xiv). Although the book has two main time frames, the 1980s and the 1950s, many digressions take us back to the period of the great magi and infamous alchemists, the Renaissance. John Dee is mentioned several times, and an interpretation of the *Monas hieroglyphica* is also included in the book.

One of the strangest modern novels with an occultist bent is Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* which, as indicated by the title, also features the English magus as its main hero.[29] If one expects a historical novel rehashing the documentary evidence of the scholarly monographs already mentioned,[30] one will be gravely disappointed, as have been many of the novel's academic reviewers. Ackroyd's work has very specific moral and philosophical concerns, and he approaches time and space in an idiosyncratic postmodern way—for these explorations John Dee only serves as a pretext.[31] In this novel John Dee does not live in historical Mortlake where the "real doctor" housed his famous library and his alchemical laboratory, but rather in central London's off-the-beaten-track district, Clerkenwell. He is less a theosophist than a researcher of the homunculus which, according to historical evidence, was of no concern to Dee. Even his student years have been altered: his master—as opposed to Gemma Frisius and Gerard Mercator from Louvain—is a fictitious character, the English Ferdinand Griffen. There are also curious anachronisms, for example, as when Dee refers to "Abbot Fludd," who in actual fact lived after his time in the seventeenth century. At first reading these are disappointing and irritating features, especially since the novel offers rather accurate summaries of works of intellectual history that were available at the time of writing (e.g., those of Peter French, Frances Yates, and Nicholas Clulee).

The scholarly references, however, should only serve the purpose of warning the reader not to mix cultural history with the world of fiction. Yes, Ackroyd had done his homework concerning background studies, but then he deliberately

decided to depart from evidence and plunge into the abyss of "historiographical metafiction."

The plot structure should by now be familiar to us: there is a contemporary story line complemented by a sixteenth-century chain of events. Both plots are narrated in first person, the early one by Dee, the modern one by 29–year-old Matthew Palmer, who inherits a strange old house in London's Clerkenwell district. His family situation is rather awkward: he is lonely, his life is empty of love, and to his own great discomfort he hardly remembers anything from his childhood. His parents were estranged; he had little contact with his father and felt mostly irritation from his mother and her lover, Geoffrey. Soon after the burial of his father Geoffrey moves into their house, a fact that persuades Matthew to relocate to his new inheritance, the Clerkenwell house. As Alexandra Lembert has pointed out, "Matthew's future development is already anticipated by an initiation dream at the beginning of the book."[32] He has a revelation about the anthropomorphic character of the house: "It resembled the torso of a man rearing up, while his arms still lay spread upon the ground on either side. When I walked towards the steps, it was as if I were about to enter a human body" (3).

In his dream he sees doors in four different colors in the house, which follow the characteristic palette of alchemical transmutation: black, white, red, and green. As soon as he occupies the house, his life changes. He becomes psychologically unstable: he sees visions, hears voices, and encounters strange characters; nevertheless, until the final chapters, Ackroyd maintains an atmosphere of uncertainty about these happenings: "Then I opened the fourth door, and I saw a furnace. Before I could move or do anything, I heard a voice close by me distinctly saying, 'You are utterly undone, my little man.' I sat up, for a moment convinced that the voice had come from somewhere within the room, until I realized that I must have slept and dreamed" (10). Or, "I heard a sound like rustling coming from somewhere above me; I looked up, but I could see nothing. The door to my room was open and, as I glanced across my bed, I noticed a white mark upon it like a little globe of smoke. I screamed and it rose up towards me . . . . It was a pigeon." As the other plot unfolds, these apparitions become more and more of a reality, and the reader gains an impression that a strange passage has opened between the different time frames, past and present.

It turns out that in sixteenth-century London Dee lived in the same house that Matthew now occupies. Here he conducted his murky experiments with alchemy, angelic conversations, and with a Faustian/Frankensteinian project: the creation of a homunculus. According to Ackroyd's fiction, a homunculus "can be taught like any other child; it will grow and prosper with all its intellect and faculties, until its thirtieth year when it will fall asleep and return to its first unformed state. One of the generation of the Inspirati must then cherish it, and place it again within glass, so that this secret and wonderful being may grow once again and walk upon the world. If you speak to it the sacred words it will prophesy about future events most cunningly, but its chief glory is that with proper care and reverence it will be constantly regenerated and so live forever" (123). Slowly Matthew regains some of his memories, and from other

pieces of evidence—for example he learns from his mother that his father "had found" him and they adopted him—he realizes that he is the homunculus, made by Dee, and/or retrieved by his father.

Although Dee's ultimate goal is the creation of the homunculus, his association with Kelly and their angelic conversations center on another project: the finding of the prehistoric city of London. According to Lembert, "Dee's notion of the city echoes the ancient religious idea that a mundane city is built after an ideal, divine city."[33] Dee is as much fascinated by the mythical Celtic city and its inhabitants, the spiritual giants who were the survivors of Atlantis, as Ackroyd himself is fascinated by the mysteries of London.[34]

Steven A. Alford has described the representational logic and philosophical core of this novel as follows: "[It] explores how space prefigures our temporal experiences, and how this spatial prefiguration is ultimately linguistic."[35] He argues that although Matthew and Dee have differing views of time and space, both of them experience the eerie interpenetration of each of their minds by the other. Because of the significance of the space—it is the same house where Dee had lived and where Matthew as a homunculus has been staying since the sixteenth century—their lives can connect with each other in the same way that the time-continuum connects them: "Palmer's psyche is not, as he assumed, a Cartesian interiority independent of the outside. Nor does his body inhabit a neutral space which itself is understood solely as a container for objects, among them his body. Instead, his psyche finds itself 'always already' within the space of his house, suggesting that spaces don't simply influence our psyche, but constitute it."[36]

No matter how much Doctor Dee progresses with his experiments and no matter how much Matthew is becoming initiated in his own past, something is missing from their existence: love. While the product of pure intellect, of language (i.e., magical incantations), the homunculus is quite literally life without love. Dee's self-centered hubris, his perverted *exaltatio* is pointed out by the ghost of his deceased wife: "This was a vision of the world without love, John Dee, but one you yourself have fashioned. You hoped to create life, but instead you have made images of death. Think of this and repent in time" (218).

The final chapter is very difficult to grasp. The time planes have melted; Dee and Matthew are speaking to each other, whether in the sixteenth—or in the twentieth century, is not clear. The Doctor enjoys a vision with the help of Katherine Dee in which he sees the "mystical city universal," meaning that "the imagination is immortal, and that thereby we each create our own eternity" (257).

An internet blogger calls this denouement weak: "Dee's and Matthew's endless search for truth is presented as futile and irrelevant and both should learn to simply trust to love. Yuk."[37] Alford interprets the conclusion as a Blakeian pre/post-romanticism, which suggests that the imagination, infused with love, engenders a type of immortality available to us all. Reflecting on the whole of the novel, Lembert poses a logical question which begs some kind of an answer: "One question concerning Matthew's being is deliberately posed by Ackroyd and left for the reader to decide upon. This question is whether Matthew's

mental state should be explained in psychological or occult terms?"[38] I certainly find this problem valid, but here I would emphasize that this is precisely where in (post)modern fiction the *uncanny* occupies the space that in other contexts might be reserved for rational explanations.[39] As I have stated above, no matter whether these novels have been written from the standpoint of an outsider-sceptic or an insider-mystic, the intrinsic laws of the genre generate those moments when the borderline between reality and illusion, logic and the supernatural is suspended—at least temporarily.

IV

It is a pleasurable task to talk about exciting and entertaining novels, and I have by no means exhausted my ammunition; however, the constraints of this paper force me to come to a conclusion. At this point I feel compelled to answer my previously posed question, at least tentatively: how can we, if at all, explain the lure of the occult and the esoteric in our postmodern, industrialized world?

I would like to argue that since the rise of the scientific revolution and the triumph of the "linear" way of Western thinking, the occult philosophy has been attractive as a *counter-culture* and also functioned as a kind of "conscience of humanity," warning against the excesses of reason, which—apart from being progressive and helpful—sometimes seem to endanger the very existence of humankind.[40] On the other hand, one should not forget about people's age-old and seemingly ever increasing desire to be entertained, particularly in a dark way that titillates with the thrill of dangerous, supernatural forces, fantasies of the suppressed Other, providing the audience with a secure position of the onlooker without being exposed to those destructive powers that are displayed. As Victoria Nelson laconically puts it: we are dealing here with the hunger for story.[41]

No doubt, literary fiction and other cultural representations can perfectly satisfy both of these needs. This may be the reason why such works are so immensely popular and widespread, and why they also deserve full scholarly attention.

Notes

1. Victoria Nelson's *The Secret Life of Puppets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001) has analyzed a wide array of popular cultural representations of late modern esotericism.
2. I have written about these *magi* in detail in my book, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs*, Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004).
3. On the quarrel about astrology and its influence in England, see Don Cameron Allen, *The Star-crossed Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941); and Eugenio Garin, *Astrology in the Renaissance: The Zodiac of Life* (1976; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983). On the intertwining of science and occult natural philosophy, see Marie Boas, *The Scientific Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962); Antoine Faivre and Rolf Christian Zimmermann, eds., *Epochen der Naturmystik* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1979); S. K. Heninger, *The Cosmographical Glass: Renaissance Diagrams of the Universe* (San Marino, CA: The Huntington Library, 1977); Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus, eds., *Hermeticism and the Renaissance; Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library and Associated University Presses, 1988). On alchemy see Stanton J. Linden, ed., *The Alchemy Reader: From Hermes Trismegistus to Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Rosario e Sabina Piccolini, eds., *La biblioteca alchemica* (Padova: MEB, 1990); Alexander Roob, *Alchemy and Mysticism* (Cologne: Taschen, 1997); John M. Stillman, *The Story of Alchemy and Early Chemistry* (1923; New York: Dover, 1960); C. J. S. Thompson, *The Lure and Romance of Alchemy: A History of the Secret Link between Magic and Science* (1932; New York: Bell, 1990); on the early modern literary representations of alchemy, see Robert Lima, *Dark Prisms: Occultism in Hispanic Drama* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995); and Stanton J. Linden, *Darke Hieroglyphics: Alchemy in English Literature from Chaucer to the Restoration* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).
4. On Prospero's magic see Clifford Davidson, "Ariel, and the Magic of Prospero in *The Tempest*," *Susquehanna University Studies* (June 1978): 229–37; Robert Grudin, "Rudolf II of Prague and Cornelis Drebbel: Shakespearean Archetypes?" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 (1991): 181–205; John S. Mebane, *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), and Barbara Mowatt, "Prospero, Agrippa and Hocus Pocus," *English Literary Renaissance* 11 (1981): 281–303. On Faustus see Frank Baron, *Doctor Faustus. From History to Legend* (München: Wilhelm Fink, 1978); and Michael Keefer, "Introduction and Notes" in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (Peterborough, Ontario and Lewiston, NY: Broadview Press, 1991), xi–xcii.
5. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971).
6. See two opposing views about the described process: Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (1936; New York: Harper and Row, 1960) and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1994).
7. See Anthony Grafton, "Protestant Versus Prophet: Isaac Casaubon on Hermes Trismegistus," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 46 (1983): 78–93.
8. Allison Coudert, *Leibniz and the Kabbalah* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1995); Marsha Keith Schuchard, *Restoring the Temple of Vision: Cabalistic Freemasonry and Stuart Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Children: A Christian Esoteric Tradition*, Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: SUNY Press, 1999).
9. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic* (1970; Cleveland: Case Western University Press, 1973); Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy. The Literature of Subversion* (London: Routledge, New Accents, 1998).
10. It is interesting to note to what extent French new left theorists were attracted to this horrifying historical character. His trial was published by Georges Bataille (*Le procès de Gilles de Rais*, Paris: Pauvert, 1965, 1997), then it was edited by Michel Foucault in the collected works of Bataille. The renowned novelist, Michel Tournier wrote a novel about him and his supporter Jeanne d'Arc [*Gilles et Jeanne*, Paris: Gallimard, 1983]). Recent scholarly literature includes: André Cherpillot, *Gilles de Rais: Un grand seigneur sodomite et assassin* (Courgenard: Autoédition, 2000); Michel

Meurger, *Gilles de Rais et la littérature* (Rennes: Terre de Brume, 2003); Morgan Val, *The Legend of Gilles de Rais (1404–1440) in the Writings of Huysmans, Bataille, Planchon, and Tournier* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2003); Reginald Hyatte, ed., *Laughter for the Devil: the Trials of Gilles de Rais, Companion-in-arms of Joan of Arc (1440)* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Presses, 1984). The infamous magician, Aleister Crowley devoted a private lecture to him in 1930: *The Banned Lecture: Gilles de Rais: To have been delivered before the Oxford University Poetry Society on the evening of Monday February 3rd, 1930* (Carnforth: Society for the Propagation of Religious Truth, 1982).

11. *Down There* (London: Sphere, 1974), 141.
12. On Crowley see: Charles Richard Cammell, *Aleister Crowley* (London: New English Library, 1969); Roger Hutchinson, *Aleister Crowley: the Beast Demystified* (London: Mainstream, 1998); Serge Hutin, *Aleister Crowley: le plus grand des mages modernes* (Verviers: Gérard, 1973); Francis King, *Magic: The Western Tradition* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), 29–31; Colin Wilson, *Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast* (Wellingborough: Aquarian Press, 1987).
13. Paracelsus's program of *exaltatio* is treated in my book, *John Dee's Occultism* (131–45), here further literature is cited.
14. Antal Szerb, *The Pendragon Legend* (Budapest: Corvina, 1963).
15. Johann Valentin Andreae, *The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (translated into English by Edward Foxcroft in 1690; London: Minerva Books, n.d.); on Andreae and the Rosicrucians, see John Warwick Montgomery, *Cross and Crucible*, 2 vols. (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1973).
16. On Meyrink and his novels see Alexandra Lembert, "The eternal return of the same? A comparison between Peter Ackroyd's *The House of Doctor Dee* and Gustav Meyrink's *Der Golem* and *Der Engel vom westlichen Fenster*," in Alexandra Lembert, Elmar Schenkel, eds., *The Golden Egg: Alchemy in Art and Literature*, Leipziger Explorations in Literature and Culture 4 (Glienecke: Galda+Wilch Verlag, 2002), 101–15; Mohammed Quasim, *Gustav Meyrink. Eine monografische Untersuchung* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1981); Robert Podgurski, "Magical Forces and Historiographic Speculation in Gustav Meyrink's *The Angel of the West Window*," *Cauda Pavonis* 13.2 (1994): 18–19; Frans Smit, *Gustav Meyrink. Auf der Suche nach dem Übersinnlichen* (Munich: Langen Müller, 1988).

    Some recent works that feature the character of John Dee: Simon Rees, *The Devil's Looking Glass* (1985); John Crowley, *Aegypt*-trilogy (1987); Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988); Peter Ackroyd, *The House of Dr. Dee* (1993), and Michael Wilding, *Raising Spirits, Making Gold and Swapping Wives: The True Adventures of Dr John Dee and Sir Edward Kelly* (1999); Ian Sinclair's parapsychological guidebook to London, *Lights Out for Territory: 9 Excursions in the Secret History of London* (1997). One should also mention Stephen Lowe's play, *The Alchemical Wedding*; the opera by John Harle and David Pountney, *Angel Magick*; and Derek Jarman's films, *Angelic Conversations* and *Jubilee*.
17. On Dee see my *John Dee's Occultism* (2004); Nicholas Clulee, *John Dee's Natural Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1988); Deborah Harkness, *John Dee's Conversations with Angels: Cabala, Alchemy, and the End of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Benjamin Woolley, *The Queen's Conjurer: The Science and Magic of John Dee, Advisor to Queen Elizabeth I* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001).
18. Frances A. Yates, *Astreae. The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975); and *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).

19. See Podgurski, "Magical Forces and Historiographic Speculation," 18–19.
20. <http://www.bucks.edu/~docarmos/PMnotes.html>, access: 2005–06–25.
21. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), 7.
22. Victoria Orlowski, <http://www.english.emory.edu/Bahri/Metafiction.html>, access: 2005–06–25.
23. "The Pastime of Past Time: Fiction, History, Historiographic Metafiction," *Genre* 20 (Fall-Winter 1987): 285–86.
24. Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich, 1989).
25. Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Advances in Semiotics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).
26. Umberto Eco, *Documenti su il nuovo Medioevo* (Milano: Bompiani, 1973).
27. Helmut Krausser, *Melodien, oder, Nachträge zum quecksilbernen Zeitalter* (München: Ullstein, 1993).
28. Patrick Harpur, *Mercurius—The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (London: Macmillan, 1990).
29. Peter Ackroyd, *The House of Doctor Dee* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993).
30. See note 17, above.
31. On Ackroyd and his life achievement, see Susanna Onega, *Peter Ackroyd*, Writers and Their Work Series (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1998); and Adriana Neagu and Sean Matthews, "Peter Ackroyd," in *The British Council/www.contemporarywriters.com* (http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth148#top, Access: 2005–07–12).
32. Alexandra Lembert, "The eternal return of the same?" (see note 16), 102.
33. Lembert, op. cit., 104.
34. All his novels are set in various cultural periods of London; among them the most mysterious is *Hawksmoor* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1985). See also his *London: The Biography* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2000) and *Albion: The Origins of the English Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002).
35. Steven A. Alford, "The House of Doctor Dee," *Cambridge Book Review* 3 (1999): http://www.smallbytes.net/~bobkat/dee.html, access: 2005–07–12.
36. Alford, ibid.
37. <http://www.cloggie.org/books/doctor-dee.html>; access: 2005–07–13.
38. Lembert, op. cit., 103.
39. See Attila Kiss, György E. Szönyi, "The Iconography of the Fantastic: An Introduction," in Márta Baróti-Gaál, Attila Kiss, György E. Szönyi, eds., *The Iconography of the Fantastic* (Szeged: JATEPress, 2002), 7–21.
40. See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esoterism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).
41. Nelson, *The Secret Life of Puppets*, 240 (see note 1).