

"The Magus: A Narrative Labyrinth in Quest for Self and Truth"

John Fowles

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Abstract

This study examines John Fowles's *The Magus* (1965, edition revised 1977) as a modern English literature that, by combining existentialist and psychological structures, foreshadows postcolonial debates on identity. The story was written during a period after fading imperialism, illustrates how English identity has been fragmented and reconfigured. The study contends that the trip of the main character, Nicholas Urfe, is a serious existential and psychological problem rather than just a metaphor of postcolonial identity. It examines how to make a more developed and diverse identity while undermining essentialist ideas of a fixed, urban self. This study critically analyzes major events, narrative techniques, and character dynamics using poststructuralist and postmodern concepts, existentialist ideas of Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and Carl Jung's psychological theory of analysis. According to the research, Nicholas's identity dilemma functions on philosophical, psychological, and cultural levels. Conchis's "godgame" methodically undermines Nicholas's English convictions, exposing individualism as a form of performance and truth as a story construct, mirroring Sartre's statement that "existence precedes essence" as well as the ensuing agony of extreme liberation. A Jungian means of awakening is also reflected in Nicholas's experience within the psychoanalysis of Phraxos, which forces him to confront confusing concepts that contradict his logical, empiricist viewpoint as well as his "shadow"—the suppressed parts of his psyche formed by a colonial Englishness. This clash takes place in the alternate Greek environment, which echoes Camus's idea of the nonsense, where the pursuit of clarification in an illogical reality becomes the very catalyst for self-creation.

Keywords: The Magus; selfhood; truth; postcolonial; Englishness; identity; imperialism Phraxos; godgame.

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الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية "الساحر" لجون فاولز (1965، طبعة منقحة 1977) كعمل أدبي إنجليزي حديث، يجمع بين البنى الوجودية والنفسية، مُنبأً بالنقاشات ما بعد الاستعمارية حول الهوية. كُتبت الرواية في فترة ما بعد أفول الإمبريالية، وتبين كيف تفتتت الهوية الإنجليزية وأعيد تشكيلها. تُجادل هذه الدراسة بأن رحلة الشخصية الرئيسية، نيكولاس أورفي، تُمثل مشكلة وجودية ونفسية جادة، وليست مجرد استعارة للهوية ما بعد الاستعمارية. وتدرس كيفية بناء هوية أكثر تطورًا وتنوعًا، مع تقويض الأفكار الجوهرية عن الذات الحضارية الثابتة. تُحلل هذه الدراسة تحليلًا نقديًا

الأحداث الرئيسية، والأساليب السردية، وديناميكيات الشخصيات، مستخدمةً مفاهيم ما بعد البنيوية وما بعد الحداثة، والأفكار الوجودية لجان بول سارتر وألبير كامو، ونظرية كارل يونغ النفسية في التحليل. ووفقاً للبحث، فإن معضلة هوية نيكولاس تعمل على المستويات الفلسفية والنفسية والثقافية. تقوّض "لعبة الإله" لكونشيس بشكل منهجي قناعات نيكولاس الإنجليزية، كاشفةً عن الفردية كشكل من أشكال الأداء والحقيقة كبناء سردي، مما يعكس مقولة سارتر بأن "الوجود يسبق الجوهر"، فضلاً عن العذاب الناتج عن التحرر الشديد. كما تنعكس وسيلة يونغية للتنوير في تجربة نيكولاس ضمن التحليل النفسي لفراكسوس، مما يجبره على مواجهة مفاهيم مربكة تتناقض مع وجهة نظره المنطقية والتجريبية، بالإضافة إلى "ظله" - الأجزاء المكبوتة من نفسه التي شكلتها الهوية الإنجليزية الاستعمارية. يحدث هذا الصدام في البيئة اليونانية البديلة، التي تردد صدى فكرة كامو عن العبث، حيث يصبح السعي وراء التوضيح في واقع غير منطقي هو المحفز الأساسي لخلق الذات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الساحر؛ الذات؛ الحقيقة؛ ما بعد الاستعمار؛ الإنجليزية؛ الهوية؛ الإمبريالية؛ فراكسوس؛ لعبة الآلهة.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The Magus by John Fowles holds a unique place in contemporary English fiction. The novel was first published in 1965 and republished in 1977. Some critics have hailed it as a great example of postmodernism, while others have written it off as an excessive use of narrative tricks (Connor, 1996). However, behind these divergent analyses, there is agreement that the book addresses issues of basic significance, including those pertaining to the essence of independence and the concept of truth, as well as the connection between the identity and the social and cultural environments in which we live (Warburton, 2004; Loveday, 1985).

Nicholas Urfe, the main character of the book, is a brilliant young Oxford graduate and blossoming poet who takes a teaching job on the isolated Greek island of Phraxos. Disenchanted with England and cut off from genuine human interaction, Nicholas meets Maurice Conchis, a rich and mysterious, quiet man who entices him into an intricate game filled with psychological tricks and charades—a "godgame" that is purportedly intended to teach, change, and free the main character (Fowles, 1977). As the story progresses, Nicholas finds it difficult to discern between truth and performance, realism and deception, and true individuality and forced identity.

This study contends that philosophical or psychological causes alone are insufficient to explain Nicholas's situation. The mid-1960s, a time of significant imperial shrinkage and cultural redirection for Britain, was the historical context in which the novel must be placed. Britain's claims to the throne were firmly ended by the Suez Crisis of 1956; the decade that followed saw rapid liberation in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, along with heated internal discussion about what it meant to be English in a postimperial world (Sinfield, 2007; Esty, 2004). By sending his English protagonist to Greece, Fowles engages in this larger cultural dialogue (Hurwitz, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

Employing psychological puzzles, fluctuating realities, supernatural features, and intellectual investigation, John Fowles' *The Magus* delivers a complex, multilevel novel

that tests traditional narrative. However, a deeper examination of identity, freedom, truth, illusion, and existential self-discovery can be found behind its complex plot. The book nevertheless presents a significant interpretation challenge:

How can Fowles create a "labyrinth" that reflects Nicholas's psychological yearning for consciousness and genuine truth using literary ambiguity, deception, and metafictional approaches? How does the book provide a reframing of the connection between the truth, liberation, and sense of self?

1.3 Research Objectives

This research pursues three interconnected objectives: first, to analyze the deconstructive operations of Conchis's "godgame" and their implications for narrative identity; second, to theorize the relationship between metafictional form and postcolonial content; and third, to situate *The Magus* within broader debates about Englishness, truth, and subjectivity in modern English fiction.

1.4 Study Significance

Nicholas Urfe, the main character, sets out on a voyage offering that tends to be more psychological than physical. His adventures at the Greek island of Phraxos turn into a metaphorical labyrinth where liberty and duty clash, the lines between reality and fantasy are continuously blurred, self-deception becomes clear, and ethical awareness develops. Examining the book from this perspective sheds light on themes that are fundamental to the concept of existence, especially concepts that were inspired by Sartre and Camus: the worry of decision-making, honesty against self-deception, as well as autonomy as a burden.

2. Methodology

This study examines John Fowles' novel **The Magician** using a qualitative analytical methodology. It focuses on an in-depth analysis of selected passages to determine whether the novel's complex plot constitutes a narrative enigma reflecting the protagonist's quest for truth and self-awareness. The existential theories of Sartre and Camus contribute to understanding Nicholas's pursuit of independence and truth. By integrating these perspectives, the study demonstrates how Fowles explores identity, self-discovery, and the relentless search for truth through narrative and symbolic techniques, as well as character development.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

John Fowles' *The Magus* received significant scholarly interest because of its complicated narrative framework, profound philosophical analysis, and investigation into identity, autonomy, freedom, and truth. The philosophy of existence, postmodernism, and psychological analysis are just a few of the philosophical approaches from which critics have analyzed the book. Most academics concur that the book has a sophisticated literary framework that serves as a narrative maze where the protagonist's quest for truth is entwined with psychological development and conceptual ambiguity.

The novel's connection of illusion and truth is one of the main issues that critics have examined. In his PhD dissertation, *A Critical Study of the Novels of John Fowles*, Katherine M. Tarbox (1986) makes the case that Fowles uses symbolic language, rhetorical devices, and imaginative tactics to create stories that subvert conventional notions of reality. Tarbox

claims that the author's fiction frequently highlights the significance of freedom of choice and consciousness as essential components of human growth and development. According to the study, Fowles uses complex symbolism and storytelling trends to make readers consider the basis of vision and actuality in the made-up world. The protagonist's internal development toward self-awareness and moral consciousness is thus reflected in the intricacy of the story structure.

In a comparable direction, Michael George Mercer explores the philosophical aspects of Fowles's writing, specifically the conflict within deception and truth, in his dissertation *Concept of truth and artifact in the fiction of John Fowles*. Mercer contends that so as to disclose more profound philosophical truths about human life, Fowles purposefully creates storytelling fiction. This perspective holds that the fictional "artifact" serves as a tool to reveal reality's enigmatic and unexpected nature. According to Fowles' philosophical viewpoint, people must construct meaning via their own choices and self-awareness because the cosmos is ruled by chance and ambiguity rather than perfect certainty. In this way, *The Magus's* intricate storyline serves as an artistic technique that encourages readers and the main character to face the ambiguity of reality and the need for personal understanding.

The existential aspect of the work and Nicholas Urfe's intellectual development are the subject of another significant academic viewpoint. A fresh study titled *Nicholas Urfe's Individuation and Existential Development in The Magus* by Marta Szymczyk (2024) analyzes the text using the theoretical frameworks of Albert Camus's philosophy of existence and Carl Jung's concept of individualism. According to the study, Nicholas experiences a complicated psychological metamorphosis during the story as a result of Maurice Conchis's enigmatic "godgame." Szymczyk claims that this encounter compels Nicholas to face the most profound facets of his unnoticed thoughts and cultivate a more genuine awareness of his self. The protagonist develops from moral immaturity to increased existential knowledge and responsibilities following the procedure of individuation outlined in Jungian psychological theory.

A number of academics have examined the novel's postmodern aspects in addition to existential readings. For example, Ésmail Avcu (2022) examines *The Magus's* structure of narration in light of postmodern concepts of virtual reality and imitation. Avcu claims that the book captures the bewilderment that contemporary people feel in a fractured world where conventional sources of meaning are no longer relevant. The story's intricate psychological tricks and staged events produce a hyperreal setting where it is harder to distinguish between reality and illusion. In the end, this state compels the protagonist to face reality's fragility and the challenge of differentiating true experience from manufactured creations. By using this storytelling technique, Fowles draws attention to the existential crises of the contemporary person looking for purpose in a fragmented and unstable world.

The novel's dramatic and performing aspects are the subject of another line of critical analysis. In his investigation of the idea of theatricality in *The Magus*, V. V. Kochergina (2016) makes the case that the book serves as a metaphorical stage where people adopt

various identities and roles. The study proposes that the characters' actions are similar to theatrical productions that highlight the various facets of a person's character, depending on notions of the literary stage. Kochergina claims that identity in the book is created through a variety of masks, roles, and acts rather than being fixed. It is suggested that the protagonist's path to self-awareness, controlled by illusion and performance rather than first-hand perception of truth, is strengthened by this theatrical element.

In the same way, Alexandra Filimonova (2009) in her thesis *Theatricality and the Chronotope in The Magus by J. Fowles and England, England by J. Barnes* uses the idea of the "theatrical chronotope" to examine the work, contending that the narrative's structure serves as a set setting intended to elicit philosophical reflection. According to this perspective, Conchis's intricate settings that subverts the protagonist's sense of reality. The intricate system of indicators created by the rich narrative framework, which blends various degrees of performance and fiction, challenges readers and the central character to consider the veracity of life. A concept that the novel's pursuit of truth is inextricably linked to its procedure of perception and introspection is strengthened by this dramatic setting.

Fowles's novel highlights how the protagonist is frequently put in circumstances that make him face an illusion regarding his former identity and ideas. The story advances the protagonist's comprehension of ethical duty and individual freedom via a number of emotional and intellectual obstacles. Thus, destroying assumptions and embracing existential doubt are integral parts of the self-exploration experience. John Fowles became a postmodernist writer that not simply challenges the conventional wisdom of narratology but also presents a series of issues regarding history and politics" (p. 12), according to Mahmoud Salami's thorough critical reading in *John Fowles's Fiction and the Poetics of Postmodernism* (1992). Salami's investigation is focused on the novel's textual interdependence, subjectivity, and philosophy.

The primary innovation of this research is the application of an overall analysis that integrates Jungian psychological analysis, existentialism, and narration technique to develop a deeper and more comprehensive explanation. This research depends on combining each of these dimensions together, which enables a deeper evaluation of the way the novel illustrates Nicholas Urfe's struggle towards his own identity and truth, whereas prior studies have typically concentrated on just one aspect of the novel, whether conceptual, spiritual, or narrative. Moreover, this study treats the narrative framework as a connected creative labyrinth which captures the character's inner dilemmas, phases of psychological growth, and conflict with ethical bounds and freedom of choice, rather than just a way to relay events. For the purpose of better comprehending how Fowles creates a literary maze that reflects humanity's search for deeper meaning and originality, the current study intends to investigate the relationship between narrative framework, philosophical investigation, and psychological transformation.

4 Theoretical Framework

In order to assess *The Magus*, this research uses a comprehensive theoretical framework that blends the philosophy of existence, Jungian psychological concepts, and storytelling methodology. This approach considers the novel just like a complex narrative construction

where psychological shift, philosophical investigation, and narrative style connect, as opposed to analyzing it from a single discipline standpoint. The research aims to offer a more thorough understanding of Nicholas Urfe's quest for identity, truthfulness, and honesty via this multidisciplinary lens. According to the concept, Fowles creates the book as a symbolic and psychological maze that reflects the protagonist's inner conflicts and developing self-awareness rather than just as a series of events. Each conceptual component—existentialism, Jungian psychology, and literary technique—reveals distinct facets of Nicholas's experiences, and when combined, they provide a thorough framework for understanding the work of fiction.

An essential foundation for comprehending Nicholas Urfe's cognitive growth is provided by Carl Jung's logical psychology. According to Jung, human identity develops by a process known as individuation, which entails combining many facets of the mind to reach psychological completeness. The psychological process by which a person develops into a cohesive and genuine self is known as individuation. Nicholas's adventures on the island of Phraxos in *The Magus* may be seen as metaphorical phases of this procedure (Gaggi, 1981). Conchis's intricate games force Nicholas to face his delusions, moral failings, and spiritual immaturity.

The research's second fundamental element is existentialism, specifically the concepts of thinkers like Albert Camus and Jean-Paul Sartre. Ideas of freedom, accountability, authenticity, and the pursuit of meaning are central to existentialism. Nicholas frequently encounters circumstances that test his feeling of independence and obligation to make his own decisions. According to existential philosophy, people must make their own decisions in order to give their lives significance. Nicholas's capacity to make moral choices and face the repercussions of his actions is put to the test by Conchis's deceptive scenarios. The difference between actual and fake existence is a fundamental existential issue. Nicholas leads a shallow life at the start of the book, eschewing moral obligation and emotional connection. According to this perspective, the story of *The Magus* depicts a philosophical journey in which Nicholas wrestles with the problem of defining individual truth and the moral implications of liberation.

The Literary Labyrinth's intricate structure, which Fowles employs to tell the story, is the subject of the third element of its superstructure. The story is seen in the research as some sort of unique labyrinth that mirrors Nicholas's intellectual and psychological development. In the text, Fowles creates several levels of narrative. Conchis frequently presents stories and actions that conflate fact and fiction. Nicholas's internal struggles are shown through all of his experiences, which serve as narrative devices. Every staged incident turns into a metaphorical test that advances his personal development. The study demonstrates how Fowles employs form and narration strategies to reflect the protagonist's internal conflicts by looking at the story's structure in this manner.

5. Analysis

5.1 Existentialist Readings: Authenticity and Bad Faith

The Magus was strongly established inside existential themes by early critics, who highlighted the novel's connection to Sartre and Camus. Nicholas Urfe's voyage, according to critics like James Acheson, represents the standard existentialist Bildung, a shift from unreality to genuineness, from weak faith to serious individuality. According to Acheson (1998), Nicholas's primary problem was defined as "emotional detachment," or a failure to completely engage in friendships or actions that would later define him. His behavior toward Alison Kelly is a prime example of Sartrean bad faith: he treats people as instruments rather than as subjects with their own claims, refusing to accept the consequences of his actions (Sartre, 1956).

Conchis's "godgame" serves as a form of therapy that compels Nicholas to face his true self. Conchis establishes the framework for existential decision by methodically undermining Nicholas's convictions (Palmer, 1974). Heidegger's idea of "being-toward-death" as a prerequisite for genuine presence is reminiscent of the criminal case scenario in which Nicholas confronts fake dying (Barnum, 1988).

5.2 Postmodernist, Postcolonial Frameworks, and Deconstructive Approaches

The Magus by John Fowles exhibits significant postmodernism and destructive methods in its complex story, ambiguity of truth, and doubts about existence and identity. In the book, Nicholas Urfe, a young English teacher, visits a Greek island and develops feelings for the enigmatic Maurice Conchis. Conchis crafts intricate psychic games that conflate fantasy with reality, making it challenging for Nicholas along with readers, to discern what is genuine. The work questions conventional narrative from a postmodern standpoint. It features an unreliable source of as Nicholas frequently ignores situations and the individuals around him. Additionally, the story is disjointed, with Conchis recounting several, occasionally conflicting accounts of his background (Demirel, 2016).

These fluctuating incidents demonstrate that the novel's truth is ambiguous and subject to various interpretations. As is typical of postmodern composing, the text makes numerous interwoven allusions to philosophy, literature, and myth (Esty, 2004). Permanent concepts, truth and deception, illusion, freedom, and control are all questioned by the Magus. Nicholas's perception of what happened is continually altered by Conchis' "godgame," demonstrating how meaning remains subject to opinion. Jacques Derrida's fragmentation theory, which contends that texts and language cannot create only one, definitive meaning, is reflected in this notion. By offering an ambiguous story, questioning established truths, and obfuscating the distinction between realism and deception The Magus exhibits mixed postcolonial and deconstructive aspects. By using these strategies, John Fowles challenges readers' preconceived notions about identity, reality, and literary meaning (Günekan, 2010). There has been a growing interest in *The Magus's* postcolonial aspects. The essay by Matthew Hurwitz, "Relocating Englishness," in 2015, is a seminal work. Hurwitz contends that the novel, which is "typically interpreted by critics as an early postmodern narrative about freedom and authenticity," further "engages directly with imperial contraction and changing notions of Englishness during the post-war decades" (p. 446). In addition, Fowles aims "to revivify a pre-imperial English identity and counter the prevailing imperial nostalgia of the 1960s" (p. 447). Hurwitz's doctoral dissertation (2012) analyzes *The Magus*

and the way sense of self, nostalgia, and belonging affect Nicolas Urfe using the conceptual frameworks of Stuart Hall's cultural identity and Homi Bhabha's hybridity.

5.3 Identity and Englishness

The main focus of the narrative is the Greek location. Greece holds a complicated place in British cultural thought: it is both the birthplace of European culture and the Grand Tour's final destination; nevertheless, it is, in addition, Mediterranean, Orthodox, and characterized by Ottoman history—not completely European nor entirely foreign (Said, 1978). Greece provides a platform for both distinction and identity for British tourists. Fowles takes advantage of this ambiguity. The sun-drenched scenery gives a sense of things darker, less clear, and more psychologically loaded in the Greece Nicholas visits, which is not the Greece of romantic tourists. The island serves as a transitional area where identity can be renewed because of its remoteness, history of occupation and resistance, and location at the intersection between Western Europe and the East. (Zadeh et al., 2025; Hurwitz, 2015).

John Fowles examines identity and Englishness, which are intimately related to the protagonist's culture and mental growth. The novel explores how identity is established, tested, and changed in strange settings and social relationships throughout Nicholas's experiences on the Greek island. Although Nicholas seems to have an overview of himself, his character is defined by immature emotions, alienation, and doubt. Nicholas is compelled to face his own frailties, delusions, and moral constraints as he participates in Maurice Conchis's enigmatic psychological games. His encounters lead him into a more in-depth inquiry about himself and contradict his preconceived notions about himself. The book makes the argument that identity is continuously formed by associations, experiences, and self-awareness rather than being set in stone.

Another important element is Englishness. Nicholas embodies a particular image regarding a young, English, highly educated, logical, and relatively emotionally detached man. His experience in Greece's foreign surroundings, yet, calls into question these traditional beliefs. The boundaries of Nicholas's cultural presumptions are highlighted by the distinction between English discipline and the more mysterious, dramatic atmosphere Conchis developed. The novel uses this contrast to criticize elements of English identity, including intellectual haughtiness, emotional repression, and a propensity for moral disengagement (Beswick, 2020). Urfe's first self-presentation positions him as an Englishness that will be methodically undermined throughout the book. Despite being well-educated, intelligent, and self-consciously cultured, he feels deeply cut off from real life of emotion. Ironically, his name "Urfe" alludes to the German "Urfehde," a formal oath of reconciliation, highlighting his failure to bring about true reconciliation (Loveday, 1985, p.p. 149-154).

The new location of Greece is a chance at a getaway that, ironically, starts conflict. Greece serves as what Bhabha (1994) referred to as a "third space"—a transitional area where identities can be formed rather than just acquired (Zadeh et al., 2025). Thus, Nicholas finds a Greece that has been distorted by Conchis's intricate tricks rather than the Greece of ancient times. The scenery itself becomes unclear: the ostensibly natural environment is

exposed as stagecraft, and the stunning villa hides secret workings. Hurwitz examines how Nicolas's identity shifts through Greece and England, highlighting the challenge of finding a place in a postcolonial setting (Hurwitz, 2015).

5.4 The Godgame and Conchis: Deconstruction within Instruction

The most mysterious character in the book is Maurice Conchis. Is he a supreme being, a psychotherapist, a theater director, an old Nazi assistant, or a former magician with magical powers? The novel's purpose revolves around its unwillingness to make a decision. Conchis serves as an individual whose significance is perpetually postponed, what Derrida (1976) would refer to as a decentered signifier (Elashi, 2024, p. 22). Conchis's "godgame" relies on methodical confusion. He tells Nicholas a number of stories about his own history, many of which are later shown to be possibly false. He presents characters with identities that change, such as Rose/June, Lily/Julie, and the different performers that make up Bourani. The mock execution that compels Nicholas to face his death is the most striking example of how he produces events that connect the lines between drama and truth. (Fowles, 1977, pp. 342-358).

This confusion has a pedagogical function. Conchis's tactics are "designed to provoke personal growth through disorientation and doubt" (p. 45), according to Elashi (2024). However, the lesson's essence is still unclear. Will Nicholas discover that identity is interactive, truth is created, and truth is multifaceted? Or is he going to get knowledge about devotion and love? Modern dramatic theory is invoked in Conchis's statement: "During the war . . . I conceived a new kind of drama. One in which the conventional separation between actors and audience was abolished" (Fowles, 1977, p. 404). The story itself employs this theatrical imagery, erasing the distinction between both fact and fiction. The Lacanian interpretation provided by Homer (2019) is pertinent. Even after all truth has been methodically refuted, the book shows a commitment to the truth. Despite numerous indications that the truth is unattainable, Nicholas persists in his search for it; this tenacity is a fundamental aspect of subjectivity.

5.5 A Return to Britain: Identity Unresolved

Lastly, the reunion between Nicholas and Alison in Regent's Park is arranged as yet another possible trick ("Suddenly the peopled park seemed a stage, the whole landscape a landscape of masquers, spies" (Fowles, 1977, p. 654)). The godgame may be moved to England. The novel would agree with the idea of selfhood itself if Nicholas attained stable selfhood. Nicholas, on the other hand, continues to live in productive uncertainty, conscious that his identity is manufactured but determined to do so (Tarbox, 1986; Loveday, 1985). This conclusion corresponds with Hall's (1990) view that cultural identity is "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being,' not an essence but a positioning" (p. 222). Towards the last chapter, Nicholas is situated between Greece and England, Alison and Conchis, and the person he has been and the person he may become.

6. Conclusion

This research looked at how selfhood is constructed and dismantled in *The Magus* by John Fowles. According to the research, Nicholas Urfe's identity problem functions on interconnected existential, psychological, and cultural levels. His Englishness, higher

learning, and social standing are all inextricably linked to his detached feelings. Conchis's "godgame" serves as a deconstructive tool that methodically undermines Nicholas's beliefs. Conchis reveals identity just like performance and truth as formed using theatrical deceit and philosophic confusion (Ikonomakis, 2008). However, this fragmentation has a teaching function: real selfhood is made possible by the dismantling of misleading confidence. Because this study only looked at one novel, its conclusions are not as broadly applicable. Research studies that compare *The Magus* to works by Durrell, Murdoch, Golding, or other postcolonial authors would shed light on Fowles's uniqueness as well as his position in larger literary trends. Greece serves as a transitional area for a critical analysis of Englishness. A reconstruction of identity, a fact that might be inconceivable in England itself, is made feasible by the Greek environment, which is neither completely different nor merely conventional. However, the book also challenges the custom of British Mediterranean trip literature, rejecting the idea that Greece should only be used as a setting for English introspection. A postcolonial concept of identity being never completed and always in motion is enacted by the novel's rejection of narrative conclusion. By the end of the book, Nicholas is not a single, true self but rather a subject torn between options and forced to make a decision without the assurance of certainty.

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