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ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
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THE LANGUAGE MAZE IN JOHN FOWLES' *THE MAGUS*

MASTER'S THESIS

Enas M. A. ELASHI

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THESIS EXAM REPORT

Istanbul Aydın University Institute of Graduate Studies Board of Directors …….. date and ……. The thesis of **Enas M. A. ELASHI**, whose thesis defense exam was held on the **22nd of August, 2024** before the jury members formed at the meeting no. ……..…..……. .* and …….……**** decision was made.

JURY

1st Member (Thesis Advisor)	: Dr. Arya ARYAN
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APPROVAL

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study "The Language Maze in John Fowles' *The Magus*", which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (22/08/2024)

Enas M. A. ELASHI

FOREWORD

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr Arya Aryan for his invaluable guidance and support throughout my writing journey. It would have been quite difficult without his guidance, advice and constant feedback. Without his insightful direction, this thesis would not have reached its full potential.

To my dear family, I am profoundly grateful for your infinite love, support and patience. Your countless sacrifice for my education and personal growth have not gone unnoticed, and I am forever indebted to you. Your belief in my abilities has been the greatest source of my confidence and strength. Thank you for being the pillars upon which I have built my dreams and achievements.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my dear friends and my sister for boosting my spirits whenever I felt discouraged. Your cheerfulness and contagious enthusiasm have made my toughest moment lighter, more exciting, and worth laughing at.

AUGUST, 2024 Enas M. A. ELASHI

THE LANGUAGE MAZE IN JOHN FOWLES' *THE MAGUS*

ABSTRACT

John Fowles' novel, *The Magus* (1965), unfolds a labyrinthine narrative that challenges conventional perceptions of reality through its protagonist, Nicholas Urfe, and his enigmatic mentor, Maurice Conchis. Set against the backdrop of a Greek island, the novel explores themes of deception, identity, and the fluidity of truth in a postmodern context. Nicholas, a disillusioned Oxford graduate, seeks solace on Phraxos after a failed romance, only to be drawn into a web of psychological games orchestrated by Conchis.

Nicholas' encounters with Conchis and his protean companion, who assumes various identities, blur the boundaries between reality and fiction. Conchis manipulates Nicholas' reality through elaborate theatrics and philosophical provocations, challenging his rational worldview. This manipulation is framed as "godgames," designed to provoke personal growth through disorientation and doubt.

This research aims to reveal how meaning is constructed and perpetually delayed through a series of fabrication. It will closely examine the text's literary devices and techniques, including *différance*, intertextuality, mise en abyme, and metafiction, which created a language maze that blurs the line between reality and fiction. As this research argues that these elements have perpetually led Nicholas to a state of madness, forcing him to confront his chaotic nature and inner flaws. Ultimately, this process reveals the fragility of identity and the need to interpret life through its metaphors.

Keywords: Postmodernism, Deconstruction, *Différance*, Intertextuality, *Mise en Abyme*, Metafiction, Madness, Labyrinth, Illusion, Reality

THE LANGUAGE MAZE IN JOHN FOWLES' *THE MAGUS*

ÖZET

John Fowles'ın *The Magus* (1965) romanı, geleneksel gerçeklik algılarını, ana karakter Nicholas Urfe ve onun esrarengiz akıl hocası Maurice Conchis aracılığıyla sorgulayan labirent gibi bir anlatı sunar. Yunan adasında geçen roman, aldatma, kimlik ve postmodern bağlamda gerçeğin akışkanlığı temalarını inceler. Başarısız bir aşkın ardından Phraxos'ta teselli arayan hayal kırıklığına uğramış Oxford mezunu Nicholas, Conchis'in yönettiği psikolojik oyunlar ağına çekilir.

Nicholas'ın Conchis ile ve çeşitli kimlikler üstlenen değişken bir arkadaşla yaşadığı karşılaşmalar, gerçeklik ile kurgu arasındaki sınırları bulanıklaştırır. Conchis, Nicholas'ın gerçekliğini detaylı tiyatro oyunları ve felsefi kışkırtmalar aracılığıyla manipüle eder, onun mantıklı dünya görüşünü sorgular. Bu manipülasyon, kişisel gelişimi kışkırtmak amacıyla tasarlanmış "tanrı oyunları" olarak çerçevelenir.

Bu araştırma, anlamın bir dizi uydurma aracılığıyla nasıl oluşturulduğunu ve sürekli olarak ertelendiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Metnin edebi cihazlarını ve tekniklerini, özellikle différance, metinlerarasılık, *mise en abyme* ve metafiksyonu, gerçeklik ile kurgu arasındaki sınırı bulanıklaştıran bir dil labirenti yaratacak şekilde yakından inceleyecektir. Bu araştırma, bu unsurların sürekli olarak Nicholas'ı bir delilik durumuna sürüklediğini, onun kaotik doğası ve içsel kusurlarıyla yüzleşmesini sağladığını ileri sürmektedir. Sonuçta, bu süreç kimliğin kırılganlığını ve yaşamı metaforları aracılığıyla yorumlama gereğini ortaya koyar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodernizm, Yapısöküm, *Différance*, Metinlerarasılık, Mise en Abyme, Metafiksiyon, Delilik, Labirent, Illüzyon, Gerçeklik

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Trust those who seek the truth but doubt
those who say they have found it" (André Gide)

Although published second, John Fowles' *The Magus* (1965) marks his debut novel. It stands discreetly as one of his fascinating postmodern literary masterpieces, with its profound multitudinous theme, captivatingly exploring the intricate expression of art, nature, and the utility of language. The novel raises questions concerning deception and the nature of reality and illusions. It takes readers into the labyrinth of language where nothing is as it seems.

The Magus is divided into three parts and revolves around an impassive egoistic young English Oxford graduate, Nicholas Urfe. Nicholas falls in love with an Australian flatmate named Alison Kelly. After being shortly infatuated, he feels the need to flee away from her by taking an English language teaching job at a private boys' school on the Greek island of Phraxos. As he explains, "I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language; and, although I couldn't have put it into words then, I needed a new mystery" (1965: 8). He embarks on a journey to seek for solace. After settling in for a few weeks, Nicholas gets bored and disillusioned with his monotoned work and company. This leaves him no choice but to explore and stroll around the island. On the island, Nicholas discovers a remote villa and encounters a magus, a wealthy eccentric millionaire named Maurice Conchis, with an enigmatic mysterious persona. Out of curiosity and entertainment, Nicholas begins to regularly visit Conchis, who subjects and entices him to a series of metaphysical psychodrama and surreal games, where scenes are acted out with and about him to undermine his sanity. At the villa, Conhcis eludes Nicholas to meet with another intriguing companion, a young girl who frequently changes her appearance. First, she takes on the persona of Conchis' deceased fiancé Lily Montgomery, followed by his non-existent relative. She then

transforms into an actress named Julie Holmes, and later, a psychiatrist named Vanessa Maxwell. Later on, the situation gets further confusing as this mysterious young girl has an equally attractive twin sister. Despite being enchanted and charmed by Lily/Julie, Nicholas once again meets with Alison in Athens to woe him back. A few weeks later after her return, Nicholas learns that Alison has unfortunately committed suicide, making it easier for him to pursue Lily. Eventually, Lily rejects Nicholas and leaves him. However, Lily disappears out of the blue without a single trace, leading Nicholas into his own investigation. On the other hand, Conchis' experiments, often referred to as "the games of the gods," "meta-theatre" and "The Labyrinth," aim to catalyse Nicholas' emotional vulnerability towards women and drive him towards insanity. Nicholas grows to understand the meaning behind the games, beginning to interpret the events critically. In the last part of the novel, Conchis and his deviousness tricks disappear. As Nicholas returns to London as a different man, he suddenly figures that Alison's suicide was no more than fake news and a part of Conchis' mind-games. The end of the novel leaves us without a certain fate for Nicholas and Alison.

The novel is known as a postmodern work and criticizes tenets of modernism through its portrayal of Nicholas. As seen in the novel Nicholas initially embodies modernist attributes, presenting himself as a self-contained, rational agent capable of understanding and controlling his world. However, he is ultimately depicted as a flawed and unreliable protagonist. As his journey in Bourani reveals the chaos and uncertainty of existence, challenging the modernist ideal of a coherent and controlled self. Fowles here juxtaposes Nicholas' rigid adherence logical character and his views of the world with Conchis. Who strenuously alters Nicholas' perception of reality. Furthermore, language and storytelling are the focal point to the narrative, meticulously crafted by the inscrutable eponymous Conchis, who dramatically weaves deceitful webs to grapple Nicholas' conscious reality into his intricate kaleidoscopic illusions.

Not alone does the novel primarily preoccupy Nicholas', as well as the readers', perception of reality and self-discovery through the complicated paradox between fiction and the nature of truth. As Conchis tells Nicholas, "I do not ask you to believe. All I ask you is to pretend to believe. Just pretend to believe. It will be easier" (1965: 139). The intention of the godgame is to awaken Nicholas. Conchis asks:

"'Do you feel chosen by anything?'

'Chosen?'

'John Leverrier felt chosen by God.'

'I don't believe in God. And I certainly don't feel chosen.'

'I think you may be.'" (1965: 85)

The focus is to hoist their perspective along with their sense of identity and consciousness. In "Games and Godgames in *The Magus* and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*" (1985), Ellen McDanial elucidates that "the godgame function as a training ground for the inexperienced protagonist, who learns and practices skills that will be useful when the godgame is over" (33). Hence, in the novel, it is believed that with this integrated simulation, it could impart participants with profound wisdom that transcends their existence and transforming their lives.

Fowles' *The Magus* elicits deep insightful element of scepticism, which can be scrutinized in light of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction. As the core of deconstruction holds, meaning and language are inherently unstable and never absolute. This research aims to reveal how meaning is constructed and perpetually delayed through series of fabricated story telling in *The Magus*. The novel draws on intertextuality, alluding to Shakespeare and T. S. Eliot to postpone Nicholas' access to reality. Subsequently, this research will explore and dissect how language can intricately play a vital role in altering individual's perception of lived experiences. In addition, it argues that the fragmented narrative structure of metafiction, as exemplified in *The Magus*, resembles that of the split consciousness of the postmodern individual, as it systematically challenges the stability of fundamental concepts such as reality and truth, constantly blurring the borderline between the two.

The thesis will examine the text's literary devices and techniques, such as *différance*, intertextuality, *mise en abyme* which create a language maze and vigorously blurs the borderline between reality and fiction. It is through these elements *The Magus* constructs a labyrinth world, where it invites reader to stroll around the maze of no definite truth. In addition, through Conchis, Fowles blurs reality and illusion, pushing Nicholas

into a state of madness, paranoia and existential crises. As Michel Foucault suggests, madness in literature symbolizes self-examination, and Conchis surreal epic scenarios vigorously forces Nicholas to question his sanity and acknowledge his inner chaos. Thereby, Nicholas' journey through madness can arguably reveal deeper truths about human nature, highlighting the fragility of identity and the struggle to discern the metaphors of life.

II. *THE MAGUS*: A POSTMODERNIST NOVEL

A. Introduction

The postmodern epoch is well known for its rebellious approach, defying boundaries, and rejecting the ideology of overarching universal truth, first person narratives and universal meaning. Postmodern texts approach the topic with scepticism and deconstruct previous conventions to acknowledge the existence multiplicity, perspectives and meanings. They question the core values of individuality, rationality, and creativity. Instead, it celebrates and promotes irrationality, hybridity, plurality, ambivalence, and multiplicity of voices. This chapter delves into the definition postmodern literature, characterized by its scepticism towards universal truths, and its employment of literary techniques like intertextuality, metafiction, *mise en abyme* and *differance* to challenge traditional narrative forms. Through these modified innovations, postmodern texts like John Fowles' *The Magus* emphasize the construction of meaning and the dynamic interaction between fiction and reality.

Postmodern literature might aptly be labelled as literature of quotation, for its frequent incorporation of citations within the text. As a result, it questions the concept of originality. This method could be considered an act of plagiarism or simply a form of copying devoid of the sense of authenticity. However, it is rather a form of critical questioning and scepticism. As Peter Brooker highlights:

> A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. (1992: 149)

In other words, postmodernist writers and philosophers alike questions traditional rules by actively searching for new forms of expressing feelings and meanings, subsequently embodying a sense of openness to ongoing experimentation. In "From Work to Text," Roland Barthes argues that every text is an amalgamation of other texts:

> [I]t itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the "sources," the "influences" of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas. (1977: 160)

Consequently, it is not the author who creates a work of art; it is rather culture that molds and sculptures it, with the author as a mere chisel instrument. This implies that the reader takes on the steering wheel in constructing a meaning of the text. Hence, Barthes emphasizes that the author's work is only completed through the interpretations of the reader. Poststructuralists including Barthes argue that meaning of a text is not stable due the intertextual interrelation between the text and the reader. As Barthes elaborates in "The Death of the Author," the author functions as a collector, a craftsman, an organizer of literary work, creating a discourse that has already existed within the linguistic system, and "that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning … but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The *text is a tissue of quotations* drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (1977: 146, emphasis added). Thus, the significance of a text is not rooted in the author's thought and consciousness; instead, it arises from their position within the language. The essence of literary creation lies in empowering readers to evolve from passive consumers of the text to active producers of the text.

B. Defining Postmodernism in Literature

Postmodernists strongly questions and challenge restrictions and hierarchies, universality of language, and concepts such as God, the Absolute, Logos and Truth. Postmodernism in literature is not a homogenous movement. Jean-François Lyotard, a prominent postmodern theorist, first outlined his influential ideas on postmodernism in *The*

Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge. In this book Lyotard defines postmodernism as:

> [I]ncredulity towards metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but the progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarratives apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy… The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, it great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements – narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable. (1979: xxiv)

He conveys postmodernism as a skepticism towards 'metanarratives,' —broad, overarching stories that explain history and human progress, serving as a foundation for knowledge and cultural practices. He highlights two key metanarratives: the idea that history is moving towards greater social enlightenment and emancipation, and the belief that knowledge is advancing towards a complete understanding of everything. According to Lyotard, modernity was defined by these metanarratives, but in postmodernity, they have lost their power, leading to an era marked by fragmentation and pluralism. Lyotard also highlighted the postmodern perspective that language cannot accurately represent reality because it consists of an infinite chain of signifiers without a definitive meaning. He argues that no philosophical or political theory can cover everything, and any attempt to impose a universal system would be oppressive and forceful. This insight is significant because it encourages us to think about how history is used to justify political actions, in this context Lyotard highlights that these historical narratives are often used to push specific political agendas, leaving little room for alternative views.

In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Linda Hutcheon argues that self-reflexivity and the interplay between fiction and history is what defines postmodernism. As she puts it:

> This self-reflexivity does not weaken, but on the contrary, strengthens and points to the direct level of historical engagement and reference of the text. Like many postmodern novels, this provisionally and uncertainty (and the willful and overt construction of meaning too) do not 'cast doubt upon their seriousness', but rather define the new postmodern seriousness that acknowledges the limits and powers of reporting or writing the past, recent or remote. (1988: 177)

Hutcheon, together with other postmodern theorists, draws attention to the artificiality of narrative conventions, incorporating metafiction, authorial intrusion, fragmentation, intertextuality, non-linear narratives and blurting the boundaries between fiction and reality. In *The Politics of Postmodernism* (2000), she emphasizes that postmodernism is a term that is frequently used and often debatable, and to properly define it one must acknowledge both its pros and cons. She argues that postmodernism is a phenomenon that is characterized by contradictions and political implications. Postmodernism challenges the concept of natural. For example, according to postmodernism, capitalism and patriarchy are cultural constructs rather than a natural or given truth. Moreover, Hutcheon argues that postmodernism does not only deconstruct dominant ideologies, but it further progressively studies the tension between the "equal value[s] to the self-reflexive and the historically grounded: to which that is inward-directed and belongs to the world of art (such as parody) and that which is outward-directed and belongs to 'real life' (such as history)" (2002: 2). This tension between seemingly opposing forces is what marks the paradoxical nature of postmodern texts.

In *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*, Christopher Butler explicates that:

> [C]ritics like Susan Sontag and Ihab Hassan had to point out some of the characteristics … of what we call postmodernism. They argued that the work of postmodernism was deliberately *less unified*, *less* obviously "*masterful*," *more playful* or anarchic, *more concerned* with the process of our understanding than with the pleasure of artistic finish or unity, *less inclined* to hold a narrative together,

> and certainly *more resistant* to a certain interpretation, than much of the art that had preceded it. (2002: 5, emphasis added)

Primarily inheriting the principles of decentralization and innovation, postmodernism's definition inevitably encapsulates a wide broad scope. However, Arya Aryan intricately delineates the meaning of postmodernism in three major areas: in terms of history, theory, art and literature. On the first major area, he states that the term postmodern carries a significant historical connotation, particularly in its association with the latter part of the twentieth century marked by the expansion of modern capitalism into this new term- late capitalism or postmodern (Bağlama, 2018, as cited in Aryan, 2022: 20). This era is characterized by the dominance of global consumerism, facilitated by mass media that blur the distinction between reality and fabrication. As Aryan argues, this is what Baudrillard describes as "simulacrum," a term that diminishes conventional notions such as truth, reality, authenticity and the sense of depth (2022: 13). Moreover, postmodern often refers to cultural and artistic domains and postmodernity denotes to the broader social and political contexts.

On the second major area, Aryan focuses on the theoretical discourse associated with the influential and prominent poststructuralist thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes. Derrida argues that Western philosophy relies on binary oppositions, such as black/white, vice/virtue and other more, and should not be relied on but rather criticized for its tendency imply the existence of a central authority. Derrida, in particular, sought to deconstruct these binaries, emphasizing on the concept of *différance*. Similarly, Jean-Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (1984: 24), underscoring that societal constructs are ideologically constructs.

In art and literature. postmodernism refers to a diverse array of literary works by authors such as John Fowles, Thomas Pynchon, Don DeLillo, and Peter Ackroyd. Their works are "in favor of self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-reflexive, paradoxical and popular-esoteric postmodernist works. They attempt to be privy to their own status as fiction and artifice" (Aryan, 2022: 14). Furthermore, critics such as Linda Hutcheon, Patricia Waugh, and John Barth examine narrative techniques employed in postmodern

novels, which challenge reality. These metafictional postmodern works are deliberately complex and paradoxical. A type of metafiction is what Hutcheon calls historiographic metafiction (2002: 4), which reveals the process of writing history and shed light on the construction of historical reality. Historiographic metafiction, in particular, explores how historical reality is constructed.

C. Unlocking Postmodern Themes in *The Magus*

As Derrida famously put it in *Of Grammatology*, "[*t*]*here is nothing outside of the text* [there is no outside-text; il n'y a pas de horstexte]" (1976: 158). According to him, the origin is not independent of its context, but rather exists solely "through its functioning within a classification and therefore within a system of differences, within a writing a classification and therefore within a system of difference" (109). Derrida refers to this phenomenon as *différance* which he considers the fundamental and structural basis of deconstruction. *Différance* encapsulates the dynamic nature of meaning. Rather than searching for an absolute truth, deconstruction leads the reader to an innumerable array of meanings. As Derrida further elaborates, a hierarchical relationship emerges, where one interpretation asserts itself as the legitimate representation while suppressing alternative interpretations. Through perpetual analysis and criticism, deconstruction does not primarily concern itself with uncovering the truth, nor does it intend to provide answers. Rather, it embodies the characteristics of ambiguity and uncertainty, revealing more openly the structure for new possibilities. As Jack M. Balkin elucidates in "Deconstruction":

> Deconstruction does not show that all texts are meaningless, but rather that they are overflowing with multiple and often conflicting meanings. Similarly, deconstruction does not claim that concepts have no boundaries, but that their boundaries can be parsed in many different ways as they are inserted into new contexts of judgement. Although people use deconstructive analyses to show that particular distinctions and arguments lack narrative coherence, deconstruction does not show that all legal distinctions are incoherent. Deconstructive arguments do not necessarily destroy conceptual oppositions or conceptual distinctions. Rather, they tend to show that conceptual oppositions can be reinterpreted as a

> form of nested oppositions. A nested opposition is an opposition in which two terms bear a relationship of conceptual dependence or similarity as well as conceptual difference and distinction. (1995, par. 9)

Themes of this nature become polysemantic, providing countless possible interpretations. As Marc Currie argues, "poststructuralism tends in this direction, not towards the interpretation of things but towards the interpretation of interpretations or towards the interpretation of metanarratives rather than narratives themselves" (1998: 23).

The Magus employs postmodern techniques such as intertextuality, providing readers with multitudinous approaches to decipher texts from other existing texts. As the French novelist and writer, Michel Butor, argues, quotations are one of the most fundamental techniques of postmodern literature, highlighting its interactive nature of crossing the reader from one place to another.

Fowles' *The Magus* blurs the borderline between the aesthetical and the real. The novel employs self-reflexivity, self-awareness, narrative depth and texture. In *Constructing Reality: Constructivism and Narration in John Fowles's The Magus,* Barbara Rommerskirchen argues that "drawing the reader's attention to its own artificial status, metafictional literature does not claim to make universal statements about reality but poses questions and thus intends to encourage the reader to think about the relation between fiction and reality" (1999: 88).

Similarly, *The Magus* encapsulates elements such as non-linear fragmented narrative and intertextuality, coupled with epistemological uncertainty, reflecting on the protagonist's mental state.

All in all, postmodern literature, characterized by its rejection of universal truth, initially challenges traditional structural narratives. Through intertextuality, metafiction, *mise en abyme* and *differance* exemplified in Fowles' *The Magus*, he emphasizes the constructed nature of meaning. In fact, with these techniques, they embrace hybridity, plurality and irrationality. Scholars like Peter Brooker and Roland Barthes illustrate how postmodernist writers dismantle singular and authoritative narratives opting instead for a mosaic perspective and references. Moreover, Linda Hutcheon's studies of postmodern

self-reflexivity underscores how these works provoke critical engagement with historical and cultural discourse, challenging hierarchical structures and understanding reality.

III. CONCHIS: THE EMBODIMENT OF DERRIDA'S DECONSTRUCTION AND *DIFFÉRANCE*

A. Introduction

In language and textual theory, poststructuralism has dethroned structuralism as the prevailing linguistic model, arguing that it leads to legitimizing dominance and control. Central to this shift is Derrida's deconstruction philosophy. This chapter will explore Derrida's critique and methodologies, particularly in the context of John Fowles' novel *The Magu*s. Under his microscope, this chapter will navigate the complexity of language and meaning in Fowles' work, where Conchis, the mysterious antagonist, orchestrates Nicholas' journey through layers of illusions and uncertainty. Drawing on Derrida's criticism of Clause Levi-Strauss' structuralist framework, this analysis will problematize conventional binary oppositions. Additionally, Derrida's concept of *différance* emphasizes the inherent ambiguity of language, highlighting how meaning is constantly deferred and differentiated. In *The Magu*s, Conchis' games and strategies, akin to Derrida's deconstructive methods, are applied to disrupt Nicholas' reality by blurring the line between truth and illusion. Through this constructing haziness and delay of meaning, Nicholas contends with the complexities of love and identity, to realize that meaning will always be fluid. This chapter will demonstrate how Derrida's deconstruction philosophy enriches our understanding of language and meaning, offering a nuances perspective on literary interpretation. With its application to *The Magus*, it will delve into Derrida's critique and his notion of the origin of speech and writing, highlighting the role of trace in the formation of multiple meanings. It will examine Conchis' language labyrinth, confronting its boundless complexity of fixed meaning.

B. Derrida and Deconstruction

Deconstructionist as a poststructuralist theory, questions the fixity or existence of final meaning. It holds that rather than a single meaning there are multitudinous meanings which are constructed through discourse. By analysing Claude Levi-Strauss' structuralist theory, Derrida argues that concepts like opposing poles—body/soul, speech/writing, nature/culture and universal/perception—are intolerable and undermine the stability of their structural framework. As he exemplifies in *Writing and Differance*:

> [Levi-Strauss] has accepted, something which *simultaneously* seems to require the predicates of nature and of culture. This scandal is the incest prohibition. The incest prohibition is universal; in this sense one could call it natural. But it is also a prohibition, a system of norms and interdicts; in this sense one could call it cultural. (1978: 283)

Therefore, Derrida dismisses the entire hierarchal and dichotomous history that persists today and since then, his rejection of structuralism has led to Saussurean schema to be reevaluated. To fully grasp Derrida's theory, which extends both philosophy and semiotics, it is crucial to precisely define the concepts that shape it. Hence, each part of the exploration in this chapter will cover a few key concepts.

According to Derrida, the connection between the signified and the signifier, as seen in the lens of structuralism, has ceased to exist. As he argues, there are two methods to eliminate the distinction between the signifier and the signified. The first is the traditional approach, "that is to say, ultimately in submitting the sign to thought," (Derrida, 1978: 281). The second is "the one we are using … against the first one, consist in putting into question the system in which the preceding reduction function: first and foremost, the opposition between the sensible [observable] and the intelligible" (Derrida, 1978: 281). For example, the signified of the word/image "rose" evokes love and beauty in literature. However, the meaning attached to the term could vary depending on the context or the individual's cultural background. For some, it could symbolize passion, while for others, it could evoke memories of loss and/or sorrow. Therefore, this illustrates ambiguity and fluidity between the signifier and its signified meaning. In *The Magus*, when Nicholas tries to find a mediated meaning towards one of the central female figures in the novel, a

character named Lily, who first appears to be Conchis' dead fiancé, lingering like a ghost in the house, whom Conchis pretends not to see. As the plot progresses, Conchis warns Nicholas that she is a dangerous schizophrenic patient who needs good care and attention. On a different occasion, he encounters Lily's identical twin sister who pretends to be Lily (doppelganger). However, shortly after parting ways with her, Nicholas realizes that she is not the genuine Lily because of an absent scar on her wrist. Later on, he evidently figures out that in reality, the actual Lily was only leading him on without the intention of being his lover, but an actress named Julie Holmes acting for Polymus Films. Feeling treacherously betrayed, Nicholas narrates, "I thought, the cunning bitch; they're throwing me backwards and forwards like a ball" (Fowles, 1965: 229). Fascinated by the bewilderment, Nicholas searches for an explanation behind her befuddled mystery, only to find out that the true identity of Lily de Seitas is actually a wealthy suburban widow, the actual mother of Julie and June, whose real names are, in fact, Lily and Rose. Lily de Seitas expresses, "[o]ne can expose only that which a certain moment can become present, manifest, that which can be shown, presented as something present, a being-present in its truth, in the truth of a present or the presence of the present" (5-6). Hence, Nicholas' exposure to the idea, meaning, or truth of Lily is contingently delayed upon the conditions of a particular moment. He is stuck in an infinite chain. As he puts it, "I knew words were like chains, they held me back; and like walls with holes in them" (241). He is anticipating Derrida's concept of the never-ending chain of the signified.

C. Derrida's Notion of Writing and Graphie

In *Of Grammatology* (1976), Derrida argues that speech, does not precede writing. He contends that writing and speech emerge simultaneously since writing cannot merely replicate spoken language as neither one comes first. Writing transcends physical graphic form, which embodies articulation and inscription of the trace. As he stipulates, "[t]he trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general… The trace is the difference which open appearance [l'apparaître] and signification" and if the trace "belongs to the very movement of signification, the signification is a priori written, whether inscribed or not, in one form or another, in a 'sensible' and 'spatial' element that is called 'exterior'" (1976: 65-70). In fact, trace replaces the ultimate source of meaning. It is what distinguishes

appearances and gives them significance. Consider the concept of a smile. When one smiles, the physical curving act of their lips is the trace. This observation is considered as an external trace. Yet, smile could trigger the concept of content, friendliness, or even fakeness in our mind. If the trace is part of the process of assigning meaning, then meaning itself is already written, regardless of its form inscribed physically or not. This indicates that writing should not be seen as a direct reflection or representation of speech. Moreover, Derrida discusses the conditions and understanding of what constitutes writing and how its multiplicity of meaning is established. As he puts it, "where does writing begin? ... where and one does one pass from one writing to another, from writing in general to writing in the narrow sense, *from the trace to the graphie*, from one graphie to another" (1976: 74, emphasis added). The concept of "graphie" refers to the written representation of language, encompassing letter, symbols, and other written elements. This implies that "the framework of the *instituted trace*, as the possibility common to all system of signification" (Derrida, 1976: 46) which allows written form to convey meaning and be interpreted across various forms of communication. If we associate the trace with *graph* whether as a form of visual, gestural, or pictural— it will be "'spatial' and 'objective'" exteriority (Derrida, 1976: 70). This transformation highlights the dynamic nature of communication, where the underlying traces are tangible written symbols. This contrast between the internal (underlying trace) and the external (the written symbol) reveals that there is an intricate relationship between language, representation and meaning.

In *The Magus,* Conchis' manipulative mind games reflect Derrida's notion of *graphie*. In the novel, Nicholas is "an atheist and an absolute nonbeliever in spiritualism, *ghost* and *all that mumbo-jumbo*" (Fowles, 1965: 103, emphasis added). Nicholas logically and rationally does not need to believe in ghosts, and sensibly does not begin to question or *trace* their existence. However, Conchis intentionally begins to infiltrate Nicholas' senses of trace by leaving misleading clues for him. For example, when Nicholas hears marching footsteps in the villa in the middle of the night or when he smells an awful sewer odor reek in his room, all creating an eerie, uncanny experience. On another occasion when Conchis encourages Nicholas to read a pamphlet by Robert Foulkes, he takes the book with him on a walk and gradually falls asleep. When he wakes up, he sees phantom-like figures glaring at him from across a ravine. As he describes, "there were the two of them

in their green shadow … [b]oth the man and the whey-faced had looked remarkably English" (Fowles, 1965: 144), who vanish like ghosts into thin air, making him question their reality: "I had let my mind plunge into darkness, into a world where the experience of all my life was disproves and ghosts existed" (145). Conchis' tactics are aimed at seeding doubts in Nicholas, to question his rigid adherence to rationalism, and reveal to him how such a fixed mindset can blind him to alternative perceptions of reality. These tactics undermine Nicholas' confidence and sense of control, to deliberately confront and trace the complexities of human experience between perception and beliefs. Hence, Nicholas underscores Derrida's concept of trace, as he navigates through a maze of uncertain truths and illusions that has been orchestrated by Cochis.

For instance, in a scene when Nicholas is walking in a room and stumbles upon a visual (graphie) photo of Conchis' dead fiancée, Lily. He describes her as an Edwardian girl with "white skin and fine neck,"; she appears "very young" with "a touch of mischief" (Fowles, 1965: 105). At night, Nicholas hears the melodious notes of Conchis' harpsichord/recorder resonating from another room. Astonishingly, he sees Lily and says, "[i]t was unmistakably the same girl as in the photograph" (159). The lady, who is supposedly Conchis' dead fiancé, is smiling right at him. He runs down to the hall to confirm what he has seen. Yet, suddenly, "she was not there ... she was not there ... there was no sign of anybody" (159-160). Conchis echoes and anticipates Derrida's deconstruction techniques to make Nicholas question his modernist perspectives. Conchis frustratingly leads Nicholas to modify his insights and to construct meaning embedded between the lines of the narrative. His enigmatic and tactical occurrences deliberately mirror Derrida's deconstructive approach. By unsettling Nicholas rationalist perception, Conchis compels him to engage with the complexities of meaning within the narrative. By tracing with graphie, whether in visual or pictural, is the interplay between the internal trace (Lily's image and its associations) and the external sign (her fleeing presence and disappearance) introduces the layers and ambiguous nature of communication. Thus, Conchis' manipulation of these elements showcases to the reader and Nicholas how meaning is delayed, constructed and destabilized through interaction between memory, perception and narrative dynamics.

D. Exploring the Concept of *Différance* in *The Magus*

The Magus demonstrates a meticulous use of narrative structure and language. John Fowles' mastery lies in incorporating diverse perceptions, blurring realities, and interweaving mysterious narratives. The novel exemplifies the never-ending chain of signification as formulated and elucidated by Derrida's *différance*, where meaning is inevitably deffered.

In "Différance" (1968), Derrida argues that *différance* "is neither a *word nor a concept*" (279) and it "is not a name" (300). In fact, it is a meaning with a wide range of possibilities, continually breaking free from the chains of substitutions. As Derrida puts it:

> *Différance* is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each so-called "present" element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past. (1968: 288)

Consequently, Derrida deliberately combines difference and deference in an act of neologism. The slight spelling alteration "remains purely graphic; it is read, or is it written, but it cannot be heard" (Derrida, 1968: 280). In addition, *différance* has two meanings: to defer and to differ and to defer (to delay). It is "to temporize ... in the temporal or temporizing mediation of a detour that suspends the accomplishment of fulfilment of 'desire' or 'will', and equally effects this suspension in a mode that annuls or tempers its own effect" (Derrida, 1968: 260). To differ is to differentiate between the two poles of a binary opposition, such as in black/white, good/evil, and man/woman. Therefore, Derrida demonstrates that language is not a translucent vehicle for expressing pre-existing concepts, but rather it is a maze where meaning is constantly dependent on other concepts and words.

Différance simultaneously functions as a bridge that links the past to the present and to the plausible future. It is yet a determined detachment from all. Such a paradox of simultaneity explains the deconstructive concept of what we call the present, or time to be

fiction. The narrative structure in *The Magus* exemplifies Derrida's concept, as Conchis employs over-layering dynamic and ambiguous intertextual narrations to perpetually delay Nicholas' ability to arrive at any signification. Conchis metaphorically embodies the elusive quality of indefinite signifiers. Nicholas' representation of signs defers the moment he responds to or encounters with Conchis. this encounter represents "signification as the *différance* of temporization" (Derrida, 1968: 284). Coming from London, Nicholas is subject to the disillusionment of love, truth and logic; however, upon stepping in Bourani, Conchis spurs Nicholas by symbolically exposing illusion and conception of himself, to reflect upon his sense of self.

Firstly, at the very beginning of the novel, we are aware of Nicholas' attitude towards targeting women only to gratify his sexual needs and to boost his self-centered ego as he calls it his "solitary heart" (Fowles, 1965: 15). As he continues, "I found myself sexual success and the apparently ephemeral nature of love equally pleasing. It was like being good at golf, but despising the game" (15). Yet, whenever he is put on a spot for a real commitment, he feels vulnerably threatened by the idea, unaware of the pain he inflicts on the women. Additionally, his recurrent escapism dehumanizes women and renders them as objects of sexual pleasure. As he puts it, "I suppose I don't know what love is really. If it isn't all sex. And I don't even really care adman any more, anyway" (Fowles, 1965: 148). He feels trapped in a monotonous loop of unsensual sexual experiences. Alison Kelly is his last affair in London, and with his fear of commitment he decides to breakup with her and move to Greece. He manipulates love as a gameplay to win. He perceives Alison as an adversary to defeat: "the feeling that she loved me more that I loved her, and that consequently I had in some indefinable way won" (46). Yet again, in Phraxos, he pursues a new desire and obsession, with what he believes to be his ultimate and actual true lover, Lily. The novel's representation of Alison could be seen as the embodiment of the real, normal, honest and bold form of love, whilst Lily represents an idealized, angelic, untouched, pure, dreamlike form of love. As Nicholas explains to Alison about Lily, "I still don't know what is about her. Honestly. I only know I'm *haunted*, *possessed* by everything over there. Not just her" (276, emphasis added). He cannot differentiate between the essence of sex and love; he is infatuated with Lily for he believes that the purer the female subject, the purer the sex experience. Conchis' labyrinth

serves to trigger Nicholas' initiation process, thereby making him aware of his cruel indecisiveness and indecision about loving one character more than the other. Consequently, Conchis plots to deceive Nicholas into thinking that Alison has committed suicide after their breakup. Although Alison is not actually dead, Conchis uses her as an epitome, embodying all the women Nicholas has encountered. Moreover, when Lily unmasks her identity and unveils the disillusionment orchestrated by Conchis, it plunges Nicholas into another pit of confusion and betrayal. At this point, he begins to perceive the mystery of the real world as it truly is and accepts Alison for who she is.Playing the role of a deconstructionist, Conchis practices and anticipates Derrida's deconstruction. In "Derrida's Deconstruction: Wholeness and *Différance*," A. T. Nuyen argues that "the parts are what they are only by virtue of the dynamic process of differing and deferring, or by *différance*, inherent in the whole itself" (1989: 29). Thus, Nicholas is subject to differing and deferring the meaning of love between the two characters. This realization occurs only after he experiences loss and pain. In "Myth, Mystery, and Irony: John Fowles's *The Magus*," Rubenstein argues that:

> Through the convolution of Conchis' macabre "meta-theatre" (367) Nicholas dies come to some painful new truths about himself —about choice, lust, love, pain, and freedom. As truth, invention, and improvisation mingle, he slowly comes to realize that mystery is itself the underside of ordinary experience, and that the relationship which he had taken most for granted—his connection with Alison—is in fact the most mysterious and valuable of all, since the nature of love is beyond reason and rationality. However, like the of the mythological journey, he can only appreciate that knowledge after experiencing suffering and loss. (1975: 331)

Accordingly, Nicholas' own suffering, emptiness, and grief are brought to him to develop a little sense of sensibility, compassion, and consideration for Alison, leading him to emotionally realize her importance. As he narrates, "because of her honesty; because I knew she was a mirror that did not lie … whose love was real" (521). Meeting with Alison has brought "the better part of Nicholas" (271). Gordon Globus affirms that meaning refuses to bound and close, and its "structures … are conditioned for the possibility of differences, defferals, spacings and the very constitution of presence, time, conceptual differentiation along hierarchal and altereity" (1992: 193).

In conclusion, Derrida's deconstructionist philosophy provides a profound insight into the complexities of language and meaning, challenging the fixed dichotomies and hierarchal structures. Through his critique of the relationship between signifier and the signified, Derrida reveals the inherent instability and multiplicity of meaning. In *The Magus*, Conchis exemplifies deconstructionist principles by employing tactics that challenges Nicholas' rationalism. As he journeys through a labyrinth of illusions and fragmented realities, Conchis aims to destabilize Nicholas' sense of self and compels him to confront the fluidity and the ambiguity inherent in human experiences. Derrida's concept of trace and *différance* bring insight into the dynamic nature of meaning, which is unceasingly deferred and contingent upon the interplay of signs across temporary time and context. In the novel, Nicholas tries to navigate the mysterious identities and deceptive appearances orchestrated by Conchis, leading him to feel off course and to question the fixed meanings he once held. This process reflects Derrida's assertion that meaning is never a static entity but rather a dynamic interplay of differences and deferrals. Ultimately, *The Magus* serves anticipates Derrida's deconstruction, helping readers to welcome ambiguity and attain a deeper understanding of freedom and choice.

IV. THE INTERTEXTUAL LABYRINTH IN *THE MAGUS*

"Nothing is real, all is fiction." (Fowles, 1965: 145)

A. Introduction

In "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept" (1996), Maria M. J. Alfaro discusses the influence of postmodernist theories on art and literature. She explores how an epoch, that once revered and canonized privileged works, is now characterized by rejection, as postmodernism challenges the border line between high and low culture. Hence, postmodernists work in art and literature are an amalgamation of classic and popular, art and commerce. They consist of recycling previously existing works and conventions and recontextualizing cultural material, creating works which are laboriously intertextual. As Alfaro argues, "this developmental has not occurred in a theoretical vacuum; it has actually been accompanied by a particular theory legitimizing and re-defining the status of texts and their producers: the theory of intertextuality" (1996: 271). As a postmodern text, *The Magus* employs this defining feature of postmodernist works: intertextuality. Through this literary technique, we can explore the intertextual element of ironic reflexivity and its challenges to originality and authorial voice in *The Magus*. This novel exemplifies a masterful incorporation of other references within a work of literature, creating multiplicity of voices, ambiguity, confusion, and disorientation. It significantly pulls readers to live vicariously in a virtual maze filled with misleading literary clues. Metaphorically, Fowles paints the maze's walls with allusions and references, drawn from Greek mythology, philosophy, and literature such as Shakespeare, T. S Eliot, and Charles Dickens. This chapter analyses *The Magus*' intertextual elements, including allusions, quotations, and ironic parody. It argues that through these literary devices leading to the

creation of a maze-like story, a world where one only gets lost in search for a definitive meaning or truth, the novel challenges the notion of artistic originality.

B. Intertextuality in *The Magus*

It is important to understand the concept of intertextuality with its diverse implications. Julia Kristeva is among the first scholars who have discussed the concept of "intertextualité" in *Desire in Language: A Semiotics Approach to Literature and Art* (1982), under the essay titled "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966). Kristeva has developed Bakhtins' dialogism, by arguing that "each word (text) is intersection of other words (text) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1966: 64). She suggests that every given word or text is not isolated, but rather exists in a chain relation to other previous words or texts. Therefore, as readers, we should take into account other words and texts which are interlinked, echoed, or alluded to. Kristeva intricately defines intertextuality as "a mosaic of quotation; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of *intertextuality* replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least *double*" (1966: 64). Similarly, Roland Barthes highlights the intertextuality of a text as an inherent quality of a text which "is a multidimensional space in which variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations" (1977: 146), In *The Magus*, Fowles focuses on weaving together intertextual ideas, voices, and allusion to amalgamate multiple themes, and meanings. Through intertextuality, both the reader and Nicholas find themselves inexorably ensnared in a labyrinth of the interconnected narratives, only to create an ambiguous ending without a center and therefore questioning the Romantic concept of originality.

Maurice Conchis, who serves as Fowles' fictional surrogate, possesses a keen awareness of storytelling's transformative impact and its capacity to influence human perception. He recognizes its vital role in shifting multiple points of view, and deftly harnessing intertextuality as a potentially manipulative tool to subject Nicholas' journey toward self-awareness. This manipulation aligns with the Foucauldian concept of the subject as elaborated in "The Subject and Power," (1982). Foucault argues that "there are two meaning to the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by conscience or self-knowledge" (1982: 781). Within this

context, Nicholas is subject to Conchis' power due to his manipulating storytelling techniques and strategies. Simultaneously, Nicholas is bound to his own identity, and through his experiences in the godgame, he gains a deeper self-awareness. To prove his omniscience characteristic, Conchis tells Nicholas that, "'I have lived a great deal in other centuries.' 'You mean in literature?' 'In reality'" (1965: 105). With this first exchange, he demonstrates his experiences and knowledge in beyond literature, history, and philosophy in comparison to Nicholas. This statement only adds up to his mysterious nature towards Nicholas, being the only magus, who possesses a profound deep understanding of various discourses beyond anyone's comprehension. Every time Nicholas interacts with Conchis, he finds himself diverted to another leading path. Despite his attempt to unravel one mystery, Nicholas finds himself only regressing. Conchis' first impression towards his intentional hypocritical stance on the subject of reading fiction is exemplary. As Conchis questions, "[w]hy should I struggle through hundreds of pages of fabrication to reach half a dozen very littles truths?" (1965: 96). This shows his subjective aversion to and rejection of falsehood and fabrication of truth and reality, revealing to Nicholas his theory of language. Rather than entertaining and distracting readers with fictional narratives, language is a medium whose sole purpose is to convey genuine information and verifiable facts about the world. As Conchis continues, "[w]ords are for truths. For facts. Not fiction" (1965: 96). Nicholas is stirred by Conchis' commitment towards honesty, clarity and authenticity, hinting at his disdain for deception and confronting reality without the embellishment of fiction. Furthermore, Conchis highlights that literature should serve no more than facts, eschewing fiction entirely. Even when Nicholas visits Conchis, he observs that there are no novels in his villa, for he has incinerated all of his novels but the diaries, biographies and autobiographies. To his satisfaction, they are "far more real than any historical novel—more moving, more evocative, more human" (1965: 143). Significantly and most ironically, Conchis' stories are often made up, and he assumes the role of a creator and director, embodying the trait of a psychotic fabricator. Thereby, to craft his own fictitious reality, he uses people to serve as characters in his elaborate narrative. For Nicholas, participation in the game is like reading a book, as he notices during conversations with Alison. As he puts it, "[t]his experience. It's like being halfway through a book. I can't just throw it in the dustbin" (1965: 279). In this manner, *The Magus*

consists of constructive parallel texts, where several references influence the reader and the protagonist's interpretation of ambiguous clues. In understanding intertextuality, Fowles knottily makes references to "Little Gidding," *The Tempest*, and *Othello*, to establish a bridge between the primary text and other literary works and enrich his maze-like narrative. Through facilitating these elements, such as allusion, quotation, ironic parody, *The Magus* questions conventional notion of originality, authorship and fixed meaning.

C. From T. S. Eliot's "Little Gidding"

Intertextuality resembles the concept of the palimpsest, where a manuscript of an earlier text has been erased and reused for a later writing, indicating traces of previous writings. The palimpsest exemplifies how all writings maintain traces of other writings. It highlights that writers cannot intrinsically produce something original without the influence of previous texts. From the outset of part 2 in *The Magus*, the reader is presented with the very first intertextual passages from T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (1942), derived from the collection of *Four Quartets*. This intertextual interplay is internalized as Nicholas' first steps toward entering Conchis' maze. Fowles epitomizes Eliot's fundamental sentiment of the journey of self-discovery and the innate purpose behind the human existence. Elliot's "Little Gidding" exhibits the natural essence of time, reminiscing the past and spiritual reconciliation. It draws the correlation between individual's transformation and the search for meaning in life, which can arguably reflect Nicholas' journey throughout the novel. Once again, this highlights the idea that all works there are always referential interconnections of pre-existing works. Intertextuality demonstrates that rather than the spontaneous sense of originality, texts are made of the pre-existing texts. Subsequently, the dynamics of intertextuality challenges the concept of authorship, originality and autonomy of creativity and literary works. Authorship as "the author of one's own thoughts, feelings, emotions, voices, etc." can be defined as "a particular combination of subjectivity and agency" (Aryan, 2021: 112).

A scene when Nicholas discovers a hidden book behind a rock (which was secretly planted by Conchis), where one of the marked pages had four lines prominently highlighted in red ink, "Little Gidding" exemplifies these intertextual dynamics:

> We shall not cease from exploration
>
> And the end of all our exploring
>
> Will be to arrive where we started
>
> And know the place for the first time (1965: 66, line: 865-869)

Fowles incorporates Eliot's poem to fundamentally create a narrative structure behind the journey of self-discovery and the natural purpose behind the human existence. Eliot's lines self-reflexively reveal the novel's own narrative structure. Fowles skillfully encapsulates and weaves the plot behind *The Magus* into three parts, as self-reflexively echoed in these lines. The first line refers to the first part of the novel and reveals Nicholas' yearning for new excitement. As he puts it, "I didn't know where I was going, but I knew what I needed. I needed a new land, a new race, a new language … I needed a new mystery" (1965: 12). This highlight Nicholas' pursuit of new knowledge to discover the undiscoverable, to sustain the mind and soul with new adventure, away from the boring and mundane London. The next two lines echo the second part of the plot where you begin where you ended the process. This reveals a poignant disclosure that our sense of deep exploration and journey will inevitably flow back at us in circles, a postmodern belief where no final truth, meaning or metaphorically speaking end exists. The last line is a used as a self-reflexive commentary on the very circular structure of the novel itself. As Ernst von Glaserfeld in "Reflection on John Fowles's *The Magus* and the Construction of Reality" elucidates, "the answer comes to him. He has arrived where he started, is once more lost… feeling insignificant and resenting the disinterest of the world." (1979: 446). The acquisition of diverse discernment transcends our lens to a newfound perception—a sense of wisdom that one can always come up with new fresh interpretation. Nicholas' discovery of the stanza is intentionally planned by Conchis, foreshadowing the voyage framework Nicholas is about to undergo.

At the heart of intertextuality is the recognition that every text is inherently an infinite network of other texts, either mixed, barrowed, transformed, and/or influenced.

Thus, an author's work always echoes and traces other texts. As Graham Allen argues, "the act of reading … plunges us into a network of textual relations. To interpret a text, to discover its meaning, or meanings is to trace those relations. Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts" (2022: 1). This explains a postmodernist dictum that texts are modified products of various other texts. The reader constructs their understanding of the past through literary texts, representing the natural progression of learning a text and expand upon it, and, as Hutcheon contends, "[a] literary work can no longer be considered original; if it were, it could have no meaning for its reader. It is only as part of prior discourses that any texts derive meaning and significance" (1988: 126). As exemplified in the "Litte Gidding" example, the direct quotation self-reflexively echoes the novel's plot and structure, demonstrating that texts and meaning are not autonomous entities. Meaning of a text cannot be dictated and controlled by the author's intentions or its content alone. As Allen puts it, this suggests "a new version of meaning, and thus of authorship and reading: a vision resistant to ingrained notions of originality, uniqueness, singularity and autonomy" (2022: 15). Hence, meaning is constructed through the interaction between Nicholas, "Little Gidding," the reader and other previous texts. This is only the opening gambit as "Little Gidding" puts forward the very core essence of curiosity and creation. Nicholas demonstrates how authors do not intrinsically conjure their work out of thin air but are influenced by a spark of other existing works.

In the following chapter, Nicholas' exposition to the influenced poem "Little Gidding" foretells his response attempt to write a poem for himself. As he roughly scribbles and pens a stanza out of response:

> From this skull-rock strange golden roots throw
>
> Ikons and incidents; the man in the mask
>
> Manipulates. I am the fool that falls
>
> And never learns to wait and watch,
>
> Icarus eternally damned, the dupe of time… (1965: 95)

The lines insinuate Nicholas' captivation, affinity and enchantment by the mesmerizing performances curated by "the man in the mask"—Conchis, the mastermind of the

enigmatic masquerades and artistic maze of allusions (95). Nicholas attempted poem exhibits a self-conscious awareness of his entrapped position in the maze of the godgame. For instance, in the last line, Nicholas refers to himself as Icarus, the son of Daedalus who flies too close to the sun which burns his waxed wings. Due to the heat, the wax melts and causes to disintegrate his wings and tragically Icarus plummets into the sea and drowns: "I am the fool that falls" (95). This given text is another example of the dynamic of intertextuality, highlighting the incompleteness of the novel's meaning. As Aryan argues, "[n]othing has remained untouched. Everything has been removed from its 'original' status'" and therefore, the myth of originality is debunked (2022: 52). Inevitably intertextual texts cannot retain any original status or meaning; its inherent interconnectedness links all literary and artistic works, thereby omitting the notion of originality.

Nicholas contemplates his relationship with the myth of Icarus, a self-reflexive allusion to the classical mythology presented in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. One of his well-known narrative poems involves a father named Daedalus and his son Icarus, who attempt to escape Crete. It is noteworthy to remember that Daedalus himself is a talented craftsman and a maestro in the construction of endless labyrinth designs. King Minos of Crete, fascinated by his talents, hires Daedalus to build a complex labyrinth to restrain and imprison a monstrous called Minotaur, a creature with the body of a man and the head of a bull. Ingeniously, Daedalus crafts the labyrinth to confound all who dared to step in its corridors, making anyone unable to find their way out. Within the labyrinth's walls, the Minotaur roams freely feeding on human sacrifice from Athens as part of a tribute demanded by King Minos, in commemoration of his son's death. Theseus, volunteers to be one of the sacrificial youths is determined to fiercely kill the monster and bring an end to this bloodshed.

Build on this mythological intertextual allusion, Nicholas is conscious of having "entered a myth" (160). At first, Nicholas compares himself to Theseus. As he puts it, "[n]ow I was Theseus in the maze; somewhere in the darkness Ariadne waited and the Minotaur … I am Theseus in the maze; let it come, even the black Minotaur, so long as it comes; so long as I *may* reach the center" (1965: 312-324, emphasis added). This indicates the impact of the maze metaphorically contributes to structuring and shaping Fowles'

narrative. Despite their distinct origins and contexts, Nicholas and Theseus share some key thematic similarities in exploring the labyrinthine nature of human experience and language as well as undergoing profound transformation. Arguably, they share a very distinctive stance in reflecting their narrative structure and themes. On a quest for self-identification and to bring meaning to a world replete with recursive illusions and deceptions, Nicholas finds himself involuntarily entangled in a psychological maze. In contrast to Theseus, he traces the labyrinth and is determined to overcome perilous obstacles and kills the Minotaur to save his people. At the end, Theseus slays the Minotaur and earns his legendary heroic status. However, Nicholas represents unattainable final meaning. As Rubenstein argues, "reality is like an onion, with infinite layers but, finally, nothing at the center … the ambiguous motivation for such a production, reinforces the feeling that, as Nicholas later proclaims, 'the maze has no center'" (1975: 332). Fowles deliberately employs this intertextual technique to illustrate the multitudinous possible scenarios, borrowing and imitating from a cloud of copious earlier texts. As Allen emphasizes:

> [T]he myth of transparency is a myth, and a thoroughly intertextual process of bricolage, of appropriating, mixing and transposing styles and functions dominates the relationship between older and newer [mediums] … thereby helping [readers] to recognize and to generate a sense of authenticity. (2022: 215)

Within the intricate layers of the novel, Daedalus, the legendary craftsman, functions as a significant metaphor, bearing a striking resemblance to both Fowles himself and Conchis as creators of the intertextual labyrinth of the narrative. The Minotaur is arguably a symbolic and self-reflexive representation of the deeper, darker facets of Nicholas. Just like the Minotaur, Nicholas is rather trapped in circles in pursuit of a final meaning, reality, and originality, a pursuit which remains elusive throughout the novel and is never fulfilled. The novel's sharp unfolding juxtaposition between *The Magus* and the myth reveals postmodernism's view of concepts of originality, autonomy, and final meaning. While Theseus bravely manages to enter the maze and conquer the Minotaur, Nicholas is trapped in the duality and labyrinthine structure of the narrative. The Minotaur embodies a dual nature, being half human and half beast, mirroring Nicholas' internal duality. Nicholas struggles with opposing facets of his identity and personality, feeling entrapped between

his rational (human side) and his primal (instinctive) urges. Moreover, like the Minotaur, Nicholas experiences an imprisoning journey throughout the narrative's labyrinth; both feel disconnected, disoriented, and perpetually lost without a way out unless they are killed. Just as the Minotaur's fate is in the hands of Theseus, Nicholas must confront and conquer his beastly facet to grow and transform from his dark impulses.

The inescapable language maze, a postmodernist perspective, critiques the concept of originality. As Aryan argues in *Post-war Novel and the Death of the Author*, Fowles portrays "the infinite labyrinth of text, language, in the story where the contemporary reader, together with the character himself (or herself), is no longer Theseus who, with the help of thread, is able to find his/her way back from it" (2020: 37). Conchis' intertextual references "implies a spatial web where different" narratives reside, each offering a viewpoint that may contradict one another, mirroring the essence of "a library, a multifaceted place/space where a number of books are kept each encompassing a distinctive world of words" (Aryan, 2020: 37). Hence, Conchis fabricates a maze-like narrative in which Nicholas gets lost, to deconstruct his preconception and offer instead the multiplicity of meaning embedded in intertextuality. Unlike Daedalus and King Minos, Fowles constructs the labyrinth of illusions to questions the traditional notions of truth, originality, artistic autonomy, and spontaneous authenticity. It is worth noticing that postmodernism does not reject or discard the past; rather, it incorporates existing texts to highlight that every text is inherently intertextual, hence, not original. This approach implies that intertextual references facilitate new readings and interpretations which are never autonomous and are always dependent on other texts.

D. From Shakespeare's *The Tempest*

As Alfaro argues, "texts [are] not a self-contained system but as differential and historical, as traces and tracing of otherness, since they are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures" (1996: 268), which questions originality, authoritative voice, and definitive meaning. In *The Magus*, Fowles' use of circular plot and intertextual traces from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* creates multiple layers of narrative and challenges the notion of authorial truth, giving way to diversity of interpretations and meanings. Throughout the novel, there are subtle and frequent repetitions of pre-existing

texts such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*'s. With this interchangeability, Fowles challenges the notion of a final authoritative voice. He employs an intertextual narrative structure that constantly shifts and undermines Nicholas' expectations. Immersed in allusions and illusions, the novel's multiplicity of voices or conflicting voices offers not a single reality, truth, or meaning but a multiplicity of meanings, a kind of text-web "in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Barthes, 1977: 146), thereby, hindering any single authoritative voice from dictating them. Additionally, Barthes argues that "a text's unity is found no in its source but in its destination" (1977: 148).

The events of both *The Magus* and *The Tempest* are held on an exotic Mediterranean Island. Both share the same saturated, enigmatic, and enthralling mystery. On the island, Nicholas assumes and pretends to be Ferdinant, as both characters are involved in a significant romantic relationship. Nicholas, like Ferdinand, falls in love with Lily, which mirrors Ferdinand's affection with Miranda. While Conchis personifies the cruel Prospero, as both characters enthral others with their wickedness, and malevolent actions creating a world of illusions either through sorcery or psychological games. Moreover, both antagonists have a daughter to protect. Lily is considered to be Conchis' goddaughter. The only distinct differences between the two is their motives: Prospero's actions are driven by desire for justice and the restoration of his rightful position in the kingdom, whilst Conchis' are never clear as he ambiguously manipulates others either to amuse or challenge his guests' perception of reality. Although Nicholas is indeed subjugated under the experimentation, he is not forcefully held captive in Bourani; rather, he is drawn to visit Conchis at his own will. The allusion to *The Tempest* challenges the concept of originality and sheds light on the unavoidable presence of intertextuality. As Allen argues, "[a]uthors do not create their texts from their own original mind, but rather compile them from preexistent texts" (2022: 35). Together with other texts, they are rather shaped by the individuals interacting within the context of their connection to others referred texts. Unlike traditional views, the modern scriptor comes into existence simultaneously with the text. In other words, their identity is created only through the act of writing itself. They are not the central subject but a mere predicator. This conveys that there is no other time for the text than the present moment of its utterance.

Furthermore, in *The Magus*, Fowles himself makes a strong case with the interplay of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, as a direct intertext by Conchis:

> He went on before I could answer. 'Come now. Prospero will show you his domaine.'
>
> As we went down the steps to the gravel I said, 'Prospero had a daughter.'
>
> 'Prospero had many things.' He turned on a look a look on me.
>
> 'And not all young and beautiful, Mr. Urfe.' (1965: 83)

Conchis intriguingly shares similar qualities with Shakespeare's magician. Not only does Prospero possess the ability to manipulate the environment around him, but he also exerts the power to control over the actions of the people within his domain, just like Conchis; when Nicholas goes for a swim the other day, "[a]nd once again I thought of Prospero … Conchis had turned away—to talk with Ariel, who put records on; or with Caliban, who carried a bucket of rotting entrails" (138). However, in *The Tempest*, everything that is forbidden by Prospero is unveiled, whilst in *The Magus* it remains mysteriously shrouded. Elena Andonova-Kalapsazova intricately explains that the connection between Conchis and Prospero is instinctively noticeable:

> For these two characters recognition of the morally preferable kind of magic intimated to them by Conchis … entails the necessity to renounce practices of magic-as-a-form-of-power, similar to the kind exercised by Prospero, the magic which has enabled them to control and direct people and events along a course predetermined by them, towards making real their visions of a superior sublime order. (2006, par. 20)

In the lavish pastoral Bourani, Conchis' villa is a place characterised by artistry and artificiality. Conchis dismantles his own image as a benevolent Prospero and Nicholas is inclined to accept his portrayal as Ferdinand, a projection he believes to desirably attain to either Julie or Lily. However, Nicholas' flaw transcribes Conchis' riddles and intertexts according to his preferences rather than interpreting them accurately. Akin to traditional interpreters, Nicholas has yet a long way to question his inability to critically interpret allusive contexts for multiple possible meanings. To create multiplicity of meaning,

Conchis once again shifts Nicholas' point of view to the character, Caliban instead Ferdinand. In "Heraclitus against the Barbarians: John Fowles's *The Magus*," Paul H. Lorenz argues that "Nicholas wants to be Caliban and reign supreme. While he would not admit it, we want to live in … a world of death where women are to be collected and displayed like dead butterflies by a single ultimately powerful male ego" (1996: 82), highlighting the multi-layered meanings in the narrative. In the revised version of the novel, *The Magus: A Revised Version* (1977), Fowles assembles and amplifies Shakespeare's direct referential text to enhance intricate depth within the intertextual maze. This once again highlights the existence of pre-existing texts, and the emergence of intertextual relationships to coincide two realities and multiplicity of voices. In *Discourse and Social Change* (1992), Norman Fairclough demonstrates how authors predominantly rely on pre-existing knowledge and the "productivity of texts, to how texts can transform prior texts and restructure existing conventions (genre, discourses) to generate new ones" (102). Hence, as Michael Boccia states, in "'Vision and Revisions': John Fowels's New Version of *The Magus*" is an initiate to discover the intertwined meanings:

> [W]hich means that some secret truth, or in its case the no-so-secret truth that one should be humane has passed on. Keeping a tradition alive is an educational process in itself, but a connection is also implied between the magician and teacher by the reference to Prospero and *The Tempest*. (1980: 239)

For instance, in the original version, Lily sings the nursey rhyme of "A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go" (1580); however, in Chapter 33 of the revised version, when Nicholas pretends to be asleep, Lily quietly comes to sit behind him and in "a very low voice she began to recite" Caliban's poem "The Isle is Full of Noises" from *The Tempest* which talks about the joys of dreams and slumber:

> Be not afeard, the isle is full of noises,
>
> Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
>
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
>
> Will hum bout mine ears; and sometime voices,
>
> That if I then had waked after long sleep,

Will make me sleep again, and then in dreaming

The clouds methought would open and show riches

Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked

I cried to dream again (1977: 214).

These intertextual lines emphasize Caliban's complex relationship with the island's soundscape. As Boccia argues, "[m]usic is the art which Prospero uses to enchant Caliban so that he wishes to participate … Conchis is doing much the same to Nicholas, who can at several times leave the godgame … Nicholas is enchanted by the masque and desire to participate, to play his part" (1980: 240). In this role, he describes the island to be lively and "full of noises" comprising "a thousand twangling instruments" (1977: 214), as he elaborates that the island is a place of sensory abundance, evoking the sense of wonder and mystery. Unaware that Prospero's is behind the auditory effects, Caliban believes that theses calming sounds came from the island itself. Despite Prospero's motive to take control of his guests, Caliban carries on describing the various sound as to having "sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not" (214), evoking his tranquil and enjoyable experiences. He further states that the "twangling instruments" were "a hum about [his] ears" (214) enchantingly conjures him to go back to sleep even after a long rest, seeking the pleasure of tranquillity and peace. Caliban elucidates how the unworldly voices induce him into a state of hypnotic mesmerisation, accentuating the surreal and fantastic nature of the island: "when I wak's, I cried to dream again" (214), he defines the vivid dreams he had seen compelled him to longingly cry out, yearning to retrieve the memories of his desires and visually lush experiences. Here, this experience coordinates with Nicholas. Similar to when Caliban was afraid to wake up, he too does not intend to leave Bourani. As the novel reads, he "pretended to be asleep" (214) which indicates his awareness of the world that has been constructed for him. Due to his attachment to the fantasy, he is unwilling to awaken from this dream.

Reflecting on Nicholas' perspective, Fowles ingeniously and strategically has Lily recite Caliban's poem over the nursing rhyme to metaphorically mirror and reflect upon the enigmatic nature of reality and dreams, and to draw attention to the profound influence of Prospero/Conchis' exerting power over the island. Nicholas and Caliban resonate on

their individual quest to find truth and meaning amidst illusion and fiction, an impossible endeavour. The Isles itself connotatively symbolizes isolation and ambiguity, hence, echoing Nicholas' tumultuous psychological state of mind. Furthermore, in *A Critical and Descriptive Study of John Fowles' Works* (1968), Anita Damiani contends that "Nicholas is still a Caliban, who, to be raised to the level of Ferdinand, must learn to unlearn all that 20th Century western culture has thoroughly nurtured in him" (63). Therefore, Nicholas epitomizes a mode of comprehension that operates primarily through instinctive desires and feelings, indicating that he has not fully grasped the concept of literature as a symbolic representation of multiple meanings, as opposed to merely viewing it as a set of behaviour guidelines. The following dialogue between Lily and Nicholas exemplifies this:

> 'You make a rotten Caliban.'
>
> 'Then perhaps you shall take the part.'
>
> 'I was rather hoping for Ferdinand.'
>
> …
>
> 'Are you sure you have the skill for it?'
>
> 'What I lack in skill I'll try to make up for in *feeling*.'
>
> A tiny mocking glint stayed in her eyes. 'Forbidden.' (Fowles, 1977: 204, emphasis added).

There are striking similarities between Nicholas and Caliban and Ferdinand. As Boccia argues, "Nicholas is both Caliban and Ferdinand, both of whom are made to suffer so that they might come to a higher understanding of their roles in life" (1980: 240). Therefore, Nicholas is a self-reflexive parody of Ferdinand's character. In "The Reflexive Function of Parody," M. Rose contends that "parody possess a self-reflexive aspect because of the dual function of the parodist as reader … and author" (as cited in Michele Hannoosh, 1989: 113). Nicholas embodies what Hannoosh calls parodic reflexivity, wherein a text acknowledges itself as a commentary on other texts for reinterpretation: "the parody actually rebounds upon itself … suggesting its own potential as a model or target" (1989: 114). Thus, due to the intertextual elements of the novel, Nicholas possesses more attributes akin to both Caliban and Ferdinand, a never-ending unresolved conclusion. This

plurality of voices, interpretation, and meanings anticipates Derrida's allegory of the infinite chain of signification.

E. From Shakespeare's *Othello*

Adding further dimension to Shakespeare's intertextual allusion, Fowles alludes to *Othello* too. This parallel can be scrutinized within both thematic and structural frameworks, which brings further the cynical atmosphere in the novel and the interrelationship of texts, giving way to the main characters: Othello, Desdemona, and Iago. As Barthes argues, "a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not as hitherto said, the author" (1977: 6). Fowles takes this a little further by interplaying the intertextual notion of parody, as expressed by Hutcheon, "an ironic parody that often enables this contradictory doubleness: the intertext of … fiction take on parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of bother the 'world' and literature" (1988: 124). It is an element that can be seen too potent in the sense that it contributes to the cynical undermining of the intended absolutes. Hence, intertextuality does not only unfold the notion of originality, multiplicity of voices or manifests across various element of character names, setting, and infusing narrative, but also transcends intertextual references to themes like race and identity, which can sometimes be imbued with a tone of ironic reflexivity to Nicholas' self-image.

Unlike traditional forms of parody, postmodern ironic parody exposes the contradiction and absurdities within the original intertextual material, deliberately blurring the lines between original work and its parody. This literary technique promotes the involvement of a reflexive awareness of its own artificiality. As Hutcheon explicates, "postmodern parody … is often ironic discontinuity that is revealed at the heart of continuity, difference at that heart of similarity" (1988: 11). As the novel unfolds, Conchis entangles Nicholas in another series of unsettling event, in a setting that grows a little eerie, ominous and uneasiness. It inclines to a trial inside a chamber-like room, vigorously making him watch the dramatic emergence of the tableau, bound under the dim light stands Lily naked before him: "this living painting, this naked enigma, this forever

unattainable" (Fowles, 1965: 547). Her naked body is laid against a stark contrast-like dark presence covering her body, "[a] new figure appeared. It was Joe" (547). Nicholas suffocatingly watches powerlessly as they engage in an appalling affection and vehemently intimate with one another. Then, as he reflects, "I had myself to be in some way the traitor Iago punished, in an unwritten sixth act… I began to understand. I was Iago; but I was also crucified. The crucified Iago," (1965: 511-512). As James Acheson argues, Nicholas "briefly sees that the Ferdinand/Miranda parallel is more accurately a parallel between himself and Iago, Joe as Othello, Julie as Desdemona, he concludes that turning life 'into fiction, to hold reality away' [521] is ultimately self-defeating" (1998: 40). Nicholas finds himself ensnared by Conchis, coerced into playing yet another self-irony, self-parody, and self-reflective role: that of Iago.

Compelled to watch them, Nicholas is forced to confront his deepest psyche as they shatter his ego and triviality. As he puts it, "I understood that I had been forced to 'forgive' so that I could be moved on to this final humiliation; a metaphorical, if not a literal, flogging" (Fowles, 1965: 501). In this particular situation, looking for a role, a persona, or a portrayal is utterly futile as Nicholas realizes that he has never actually had the opportunity to pick a role or a game that favours him for they have often been picked for him. His resemblance to Iago, his involvement in the labyrinth of manipulation, has indeed led him to understand that he is nothing without Conchis. The false sense of attained freedom as shown from the beginning of part 2, is nothing but an illusion, bound and imprisoned by curiosity and Conchis' exploiting games. Furthermore, in "Theatrical Deception: Shakespearean Allusion in John Fowles," Douglas Wight and Kenneth Grant argue that Nicholas "accepts it, but tried immediately to make his Iago better suited to his own self-image. Such theatrics reveal his continued blindness and immaturity" (1987: 6). Here, Nicholas underscores the parallel line between his own reality and the world depicted in Shakespeare's *Othello*. As Wight and Grant contend, *The Magus* is a "comparative tacky world" and its "purpose of *ironic* humour" is seen as crude and harshly deceitful (1987: 90, emphasis added). Conchis implicitly proves that Nicholas is no more than a victimized pawn trapped by his scripted god-game.

Driven by his tempered emotional state and determined to unravel Lily's identity, despite her astounding deceitfulness and incredulousness liaison with Joe, Nicholas

returns to London. He starts to recount the investigation artfully by incorporating two stanzas from *Othello:*

> She is abus'd, stol'n from me, and corrupted
>
> By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
>
> For nature so preposterously to err,
>
> Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
>
> And:
>
> A maiden never bold;
>
> Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
>
> Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
>
> Of years, of country, credit, everything,
>
> To fall in love with what she fear'd look on! (1965: 568)

The action of Shakespeare's play arises with a poignant portrayal of Othello's incredulity, capturing his disbelief and declaration, "[s]he is abuse'd, stol'n, and corrupted" as he grapples with agony upon suspecting Desdemona's betrayal. This ironic intertextual reference serves as a catalyst to Nicholas' realization of Lily's treacherous and deceitful nature. Considering Nicholas' past licentious behaviour with women, it is ironic that he perceives Lily's betrayal as the most egregious offense, in which it interplays his ironic self-reflexive hypocrisy. Here, Othello furiously questions, "[f]or nature so preposterously to err, [b]eing not deficient, blind, or lame of sense," pondering how the perfect, angelic, and flawless Desdemona could audaciously commit such ugly and horrific transgression. To parallel with Lily, here Desdemona epitomizes the emblem of modesty and reticence to be "[a] maiden never bold," lovely with demurring nature. She has never been crude but rather is passive to an extent that she gets "[b]lushed at herself" for making any move of assertiveness. Behind his self-irony, Nicholas' relation to Othello's heart-rending distress is unmatched, for falling "in love with what she fear'd look on!" prompting avoidance of those who obscure their true selves. Hence, this direct intertextual reference elucidates Nicholas' ironic inner turmoil, struggling to comprehend Lily's artificiality,

whom he perplexingly conceived to be the most virtuous and modest woman he has ever met.

Fowles incorporates playful elements such as ironic self-parody to create self-awareness and reflexivity. This self-reflexive commentary on the act highlights Nicholas' inability to sense his own overall shifts of perspectives and suggests his ironic shifts to the role: honest Iago, more like the manipulative malice Iago, who betrays his surroundings for his selfish needs to reveal the unwanted truth. As Katherine M. Tarbox elucidates, "Nicholas is cast as Iago, a miserable creature who has loved neither wisely nor well … Like Iago, he is doomed to cause the ruins of other (such as Alison) through his vanity and compulsive fantasizing" (1972: 29).

Abruptly, Nicholas goes to Dinsford House—Much Hadham to visit Lily's mother, Mrs. Lily de Seitas. Nicholas believes that if he sees and confronts her about her daughters' infidelity, she could help him enclose Alison's hiding place for him. However, upon their meeting, he is taken aback by her response and reaction, calling out to him "an unscrupulous collector falls in love with a painting he wants. And will do anything to get" (1965: 589). She accuses him of being a man with the lack of responsibility and consideration towards women. Foolishly proving her point:

> [e]xcept that this wasn't a painting. It was a girl with as much morality as a worn-out *whore* from the Place Pigalle"…
>
> "Shall I call those two down there? Tell your son how his sister performs — I think that's the euphemism — with a *Negro*?"
>
> [Mrs. Lily de Seitas] let silence pass again, as if to isolate what I said; as people leave a question unanswered in order to snub the questioner.
>
> "Does a negro make it so much worse?"
>
> "It doesn't make it any better. (1965: 589, emphasis added)

When Mrs. Lily de Seitas holds him accountable for his double standard behaviour towards women, and as shown above, Nicholas does not only fail to be accountable but responds with rebuke and racial slurs against Lily's boyfriend, Joe. Nicholas observes his inability to retain himself, a pivotal moment when he is fuelled by his own spite. He

maliciously bashes out, like Iago's speech snitching to Barbantio about Desdemona's secret marriage with Othello, the Moorish general. An irony that allows critical distancing from the actual Shakespearian line from *Othello*, where here Nicholas employs racial epithets to strike a reaction from Mrs. de Steitas:

> Zounds, sir, you're robb'ed for
>
> shame, put on your gown;
>
> Your heart is burst; you have lost half your soul.
>
> Even now, very now, an old black ram is tupping your white ewe. (Shakespeare: 1993, 1.1.83-86)

In the hope that she would react similarly to Barbantio's naivety, he incises "robb'ed for shame" as if she would be devasted and shattered by his disclosure. Nicholas then asserts, "you have lost your soul," drawing a parallel corelation between Joe's relationship with Lily, and the imagery of "a black ram is tapping your white ewe" suggesting that her innocence and purity is tarnished. This disclosure would vehemently provoke a reaction from Mr. de Seitas, but again fails to do so. In "John Fowles: Existence as Authorship," Dwight Eddins argues that "[t]he result in Nicholas' case is a seemingly endless succession of ionic poses behind which he can hide from recognizing his personal inadequacy in the face of infinite freedom and potentiality" (1976: 213). Nicholas willingly embraces his role from Ferdinand to Iago; nonetheless they witness few signs of growth and not a mere stubbornly static character. As Peter Wolfe states:

> Urfe compares himself to Oedipus, Orestes, Orpheus, Theseus, Adonis, Candide, Adam, Robinson Crusoe, and the self-destroying rebel-son, Icarus. Several Shakespearean echoes are sounded … Urfe is also likened to Iago and Malvalio, Shakespeare's two leading figures of vice, egotism, and immorality. These figures are also outsiders, and like them, Urfe chafes at being left out. (1976: 100)

Throughout the novel, Nicholas egoistically harbours a sense of narcissism and personal superiority. It is through these self-parody, self-irony, self-reflexive reality checks and confrontations that he learns his actions are no more virtues than those of Lily, Alison, Conchis or Mrs. de Seitas.

To sum up, Fowles employs the weaving element of intertextuality, such as allusions, quotation, and ironic parody in the novel. As a postmodernist, he invites his readers to explore the unattainable depth of meaning and the quest for a definite truth, all under the umbrella of questioning the very concept of originality in art. As Conchis intended to hypocritically tell Nicholas, "[f]iction is the worst form of connection," the novel in fact is not the worst form of contact, but rather the best form (1965: 113). Fowles' use of intertextuality craftly elucidates how skilfully and why he adeptly creates his narrative by appropriating pre-existing materials within the cultural and social discourse. Drawing on Julia Kristeva's definition, intertextuality is a literary device that enables a possibility to see and recognize texts as an intertext and an interrelation between texts with other texts. Hence, intertextuality brings insight into the understanding of the mechanism of the text. As Linda Hutcheon argues, intertextuality "is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to the past in context" (1988: 133). In *The Magus*, intertextuality refers to two form of desires: first, the desire to bridge the gap between the past and Nicholas' present, and second, the desire to understand the past within Conchis' contextual framework. Despite the fact that Shakespeare's plays have influenced Fowles' novel, the resulting structure from the transformation of this parallel dimension into a novel makes it distinct; as any thread of the novel holds its own uniqueness and essence, depending on the readers acquaintances with the direct and indirect intertextual references and allusions. These archetypes are only forged, shaped and perceived through the lens of the readers' educational background, life experiences, personal and/or social statues.

V. *MISE EN ABYME*: THE LABYRINTHINE HOUSE OF MIRRORS

"Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer. Then you learn."

"To live alone?"

"To live. With things as they are." (Fowles: 99)

A. Introduction: Fiction within Fiction

Mise en abyme refers to an iconic decoding representation of a mirror within a mirror, or in its original French term "placed into the abyss." In literature, it is a narrative technique where mini stories are told within a larger narrative to create a self-reflexive dimension in the text. Postmodernists use this technique to add a self-reflective dimension to their works. As Aryan expounds, *mise en abyme* "is a kind of self-reflexive mirroring. For example, a character in the narrative may feel confused and lost whilst reading a story in which a character feels confused and lost when reading a story" (2022: 9). An example would be John Barth's collection of short stories, entitled *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) in the middle of which lies a short story entitled "Lost in the Funhouse" in which a character is lost in the funhouse of deciphering the codes of the text he has obtained. *Mise en abyme* faces the reader with multiple layers of meanings, creating a sense of duplication, complexity and self-reflexivity within the narrative. In *Beyond the Mirror and the Lamp: Symbolist Frames and Spaces*, Richard A. Cardwell defines *mise en abyme* as "a series of endless overlapping, enclosed networks of conceptual or structural spaces which form a kind of labyrinth leading to a shifting, ever-unattainable nucleus or centre" (1989: 271). This "ever-unattainable nucleus" serves as a metaphor for the inherent elusiveness of

definitive meaning, truth, or origin in a text. This structure mirrors Conichis' labyrinthine nature of open interpretation, where Nicholas' every attempt to reach a final, central meaning ends up only in further layers of uncertainty. The text becomes a self-reflexive space, constantly referring back to itself and thus preventing any closure. *Mise en abyme* takes various manifesting forms such as stories within a story, plays within a play, or characters emulating their own narrative existence.

In addition, in "The Literary Theory of *Mise en Abyme* and its Philosophical Meaning" Iddo Dickmann argues that in a work that draws on *mise en abyme*, although "the difference between the reflected and the reflecting does persist, one cannot stably discern here two respective substances, that is, determine which is the origin and which is the copy. There is no unique, singular" (2019: 12). This technique blurs the borderline between the original and the reflection, challenging the notion of singular, unique reality and originality. *Mise en abyme* reflects and repeats itself endlessly, just as two mirrors set up in front of each other does, which again destabilizes the notion of absolute reality and origin. Hence, the subject (Nicholas) and the object of mirroring (Conchis' mini stories) is constantly changing. The true focus of reflection is not merely the person facing the mirror or the mirror itself, but rather the border/space between them. In the novel, Conchis embodies a *mise en abyme* of Fowles, reflecting his perspectives on fiction and narrative techniques. As Conchis portrays the role of a magician, Fowles too is a as a craftsman of fiction works like a magician by creating an illusory world of fiction in which the reader is lost in telling the real from the fictional.

Consequently, this chapter will explore the interplay between Nicholas' reality and illusion, as well as his conventional notions of truth and fiction, within Conchis' shared anecdotes. It will examine these narratives through the lens of metafiction and reflexivity, by highlighting the *mise en abyme* technique to deconstruct the labyrinthine house of mirrors which creates a complex over-layering narrative. This chapter argues that by employing *mise en abyme*, Conchis not only blurs the boundary between reality and fiction but also exposes the inherit instability of truth and perception. Through Conchis' multi-layered fiction within fiction anecdotes and Nicholas' shifting reality, Fowles demonstrates how fiction and reality are mutually no more than a metafictional reflective

construct, which continuously reshapes one another revealing the fluid and slippery nature of truth.

B. *Mise en abyme* in *The Magus*

Conchis employs *mise en abyme,* for he crafts the semblance of reality, structures the universe and gives meaning to the fictitious world. In Conchis constructed fictional world, both the reader and Nicholas become lost in the islands' masquerade in a quest to find a final meaning amidst the allusions and metaphors. This section will explore the ambiguity of fiction within fiction, ultimately suggesting that "[a]n answer is always a form of death" (1965: 618). Conchis epitomizes this notion even as the ever-changing trickster into a mind-twisting manipulative storyteller, by quoting, "[w]ords are for truth. For facts. Not Fictions" (96). Counter-intuiting his proclamation, Conchis is the architect behind false identities and concocted stories about his own history. Subsequently, Nicholas is faced with six fictions within fiction fabricated by Conchis himself. The first involves a Swiss Shepherd, while the other four delve into Conchis' autobiographic history and the last tale is a fairytale entitled "The Prince and the Magician."

Fowles enriches the novel with self-reflexive consciousness to expose delicate artifice which mirrors itself through cunning games, primarily verbal, an imaginary world generated by language. In "John Fowles, John Hawks, Claude Sion: Problem of Self and Form in the Post-modernist Novel: a Comparative Study" (1980), Robert Burden argues that "logic of narrative is grounded in a 'mise en abyme', a mirror-like self-reflection of the process of writing and modes of its interpretation" (173). In other words, any story-within-story structure self-reflexively draws attention to the wats it, together with reality, is written and understood. In *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980), Linda Hutcheon calls this type of narrative a "mimesis of process" in which:

> [N]arrative act itself is … part of the action … [It is] an adjective to signal this study's rejection of the split between process (the storytelling) and product (the story told). Given the diachronic implication of this framework, the realism of the nineteenth century, which is based almost entirely on what will be called a *mimesis*

> *of product*, will be seen more as a reductive limitation of novelistic mimesis than as the paradigm or the defining characteristic of the genre. (5, emphasis added)

The Magus is a "mimesis of process" as it acknowledges both the product and the process of fiction by drawing the reader's attention to the dynamics of its own creation. To that aim, Conchis vigilantly strategizes his trap house by continuously beguiling Nicholas, sharing detailed information about his relations and rough experiences to deceptively manipulate Nicholas into the world of forgeries and imaginations. Conchis fabricates these stories to build his trust and fill in Nicholas' gap of curiosity and reliability towards these ambiguous self-reflective narratives. This self-reflexive mirroring, *mise en abyme* effect, deepen the intricacies of Conchis' tales. However, what happens when one gets lost in the house of mirror? As a result, Nicholas picks up the broken pieces of mirrors, trying to piece together the unattainable truth, failing to distinguish between the object and its reflected image. This relentless impossible quest, driven by the force of curiosity, leads to a kind of insanity. Emphasizing the disorienting technique of *mise en abyme*, this research argues that these endless reflections and refractions of Conchis' stories challenge Nicholas to confront his flawed attributes with the people and the world around him. Conchis' stories are mainly a copy of main narrative, an aim to help Nicholas to reflect upon. Additionally, the inclusion of the fairy tale, "The Prince and The Magician," within Nicholas' self-reflection story amplifies the theme of illusion as a means of copying with the inevitability of death.

C. Mirroring The Swiss Shepherd, Alphanse de Deukans & The Prince and Magician

Conchis narrates to Nicholas about his old acquaintance with a Swiss shepherd. The story functions a *mise en abyme* of the novel and fiction in general. The story is about a man who comes all alone to Greece, seeking to live the remainder of his life happily in isolation. As Conchis describes, the shepherd chooses to reside in a "ruined cottage" (Fowles, 1965: 99) on the edge of the island, far away from everything. The man peculiarly turns away from this devotion to tend to goats. Conchis even adds that he was "absolutely alone. No one ever wrote to him. Visited him. Totally alone. And I believe the happiest man I have ever met" (99). Prior to this story, Nicholas remarks, "'[l]oneliness

has its advantages'. I looked at him. 'Hasn't it?'" (99). Conchis is implicitly indicating to Nichols the enduring idea of finding happiness in solitude. The story is a reflection that suggests the aptitude of learning to be true to oneself, to be self-reliant or to be content in one's own company even if it costs one death in isolation. However, Conchis' story does not end happily as Nicholas might have hoped and reflected upon, for the lone shepherd tragically "'died in 1937. A stroke … all his goats were dead too'" (100). This idyllic portrayal view of solitude is deeply flawed. This research argues that the shepherd's isolation does not necessarily show signs of strength but a coward retreat from connections and life's challenges, a perilous illusion in fact. Nicholas' earlier statement, "[l]oneliness has its advantages" is deeply ironic in this context, as Conchis reveals the contrary. The shepherd's stagnant abandonment of his passion symbolizes a decline in his personal and intellectual fulfilment. Rather than signifying peace, it is a decay to despair. His death and the death of his goats symbolize the hollowness of his lonely life, an unfulfilled existence. In addition, despite Nicholas being moved by the story, his observation of Conchis' locking eyes, grimacing as though, "he found death a joker" (100), also implies a cynical view Conchis' both mortality and the shepherd's solitary existence. His grimaced reaction indicates that Conchis perceives those who pursue happiness through isolation not as futile, but tragically misguided. Thus, this reflective narrative technique helps Nicholas question his romanticized perception of loneliness: does one genuinely find true fulfilment in solitude or does it lie behind human engagement?

As we can see here, Fowles' use of *mise en abyme* in this story adds a layer of self-reflexivity to the narrative. Through Conchis' tale to Nicholas, Fowles mirrors the broader themes of the novel, creating a microcosm of its central ideas. Conchis tactically manipulates Nicholas with what seems to be a straightforward moral only to twist it ironically with a tragic ending. This fosters a sense of recursive self-reflexivity, engaging Nicholas' self-consciousness, and the reader by the extension, to reconsider initial interpretation and question the reliability of the narrators, both Fowles and Conchis. Consequently, *mise en abyme* contributes to deepen the narrative complexity, by blurring the line between fictions and reality within the story.

Mise en abyme creates a self-referential structure wherein smaller factors within the narrative mirror and reflect the larger whole. This allows the novel to create a

metaphorical copy of itself alongside the main narrative to prompt Nicholas to reflect on his deep-seated flaw towards women. Conchis' aim is to disconnect Nicholas from his previous self, as selfishness is his ultimate prime motivator, and to come to a self-realization. He is obliged to learn the hard way of confronting his own inauthenticity and to take responsibility for his action. Conchis' third story, featuring Alphonse de Deukans, exemplifies this. He first describes de Deukans, a person who is fond of collecting musical instruments and adores decorative objects. He also describes him as an aristocrat with "no relation," "immensely rich" and most intriguingly "a misogynist" (1965: 182), signifying his disdain for women and perhaps hinting his secluded personality like Nicholas. Conchis continues by narrating his very first visit to Givray-le-Duc, expressing with amusement and astonishment about the place being not just an ordinary château but a "vast museum":

> There were countless galleries, of paintings, of porcelain, of *objets d'art* of all kinds. A famous library. A really unsurpassed collection of early keyboard instruments. Clavichords, spinets, virginals, lutes, guitars. One never knew what one would find. A room of Renaissance bronzes. A case of Breguets. A wall of magnificent Rouen and Nevers faience. An armory. A cabinet of Greek and Roman coins. I could inventory all night, for he had devoted all his life to this collecting of collections … He collected in order to collect, of course. (183)

De Deukan is an obsessive collector. He possesses grandiose antiques and takes pleasure in preserving them, keeping them for his own self-satisfaction. Again, Conchis effortless ability to illustrate this story is to implicitly pinch Nicholas with a lesson to contemplate upon, allusively suggesting that art is a thematic metaphor for life and is intended to bring Nicholas' moral in action. Hindered by his fear of accountability and commitment to his first lover, Alison, Nicholas is yet unable to live an authentic life. Through the story of de Deukans, Conchis penetrates through Nicholas' rigid egoism to elicit sense of responsibility towards women. Hence, the parallel action of de Deukans' abusing the function of art is mirrored in Nicholas' penchant for objectifying women, collecting them as possessions whenever he gets infatuated with one. This is evident when Lily de Seitas (Lily's mother) accuses him by stating, "[m]y daughters were nothing but a personification of your own selfishness," mirroring him to the "unscrupulous collector [who] falls in love with a painting he wants. And will do anything to get [it]" (Fowles, 1965: 589).

This pushes further with Conchis' emphasis on de Deukans' art pieces. In which his most pivotal chief piece is favoured among his other collection, the "Mirabelle, *la maitresse-Machine*" (1977: 183). A piece where De Deukans keeps her away hidden behind locked doors, as he conveys, a "naked woman who when set in motion lay back in her face four-poster bed, drew up her knees and then opened them together with her arms… she had a device that made it unlikely that she would ever cuckold her owner" (183). Mirabelle, as a sex-machine, symbolizes Nicholas' objectification of Alison or Lily/Julie, as he indulges in a lustful and masturbatory life. Much like mirroring de Deukans' tendencies, he fantasizes about making love to them instead of committing to a dignified relationship with one of the women he genuinely loves. Hence, his selfishness, sexism and egoism blind his vision of honouring women. In "Self, World, and Art in the Fiction of John Fowles" 1996, Susana Onega points out that "the aim of the tale … is to correct the young Nicholas's conception of reality and truth as way of bringing about his transformation from an egotistic woman collector … and failed poet-to-be, to a loving husband and a truly creative writer" (41).

Furthermore, when de Deukans comes back from his visit to Italy, the Château is engulfed with flames and consumes most his possessions, such as books, paintings, porcelains, instruments and his favourite Mirabelle, leaving him nothing behind but ashes. After two weeks, the hapless so-called collector finds himself incapable of living another meaningful life. Succumbed to the weight of his fractured identity, he commits suicide: "with a smile on his face" (Fowles, 1965: 192). Arguably, Conchis implies to touch upon Nicholas' distorted version of himself as his fundamental flaw lies in misinterpreting fiction. This consequently leads him to mis reflect life, coping to misread signs as an excuse for his selfish attitude: "[t]his is true of all collecting. It extinguishes that moral instinct. The object finally possesses the possessor" (184). It is apparent that he is reflecting on de Deukan's blinded by obsession, selfishness, and ignorance, –a man with no real human accomplishments: "he was a man from a perfect world lost in a very imperfect one" (185). Moreover, in *The Aristos*, Fowles states that:

> It is the possessor who is always the possessed. Our mania for collecting not only objects worth money but experiences that have cost money, and our regarding of such a thesaurus of experiences as evidence of a valid existence ... We seem to

> ourselves to live in exile from all we cannot afford. The pleasures that cost nothing come to seem worth nothing. (1968: 128)

To quote Conchis' simile, "Greece is like a mirror. It makes you suffer, then you learn … To live. With things as they are" (1965: 99), as it could elucidate Fowles' perception of Greece as a metaphor for discovering one's authentic self and uncovering truth. In other words, Greece serves as a catalyst for self-consciousness and introspection, deliberately forcing Nicholas to inquire his identity and contingent reality.

Thus, the *mise en abyme* technique is vividly illustrated through Conchis' storytelling about de Deukans' art pieces and most particularly in "Mirabelle, la maitresse-Machine." Through this allegory, it mirrors Nicholas' objectification and egoistic attributes towards women, thrusting him towards genuine self-transformation and realization.

Another story employing *mise en abyme* is Nicholas' most significant discovery on the island: three sheeted containing a fairy tale titled "The Prince and The Magician" (Fowles, 1965: 534). It is no coincidence that this short fabulation is purposely directed at Nicholas, the last piece of self-reflection where he discovers the resemblance between the prince's story and his own life. For the tale narrates about a prince, "who believed in all things but three" (534): princesses, other islands and the concept of God. This scepticism stems from his father's influence, the king, who assures him that they do not actually exist. However, driven by curiosity, the young prince ventures away from the palace and homeland. Bewildered by its unfamiliar creatures and scenes that he cannot even name, the prince sets foot on other islands. One day, as he approaches a boat, he encounters a strange man who claims to be God. Upon his return, the king tells him that he has rather been deceived by a magician. Once again, the prince flees to meet with the magician, who reveals that in "your father's kingdom there are many islands and many princesses. But you are under your father's spell" (535), affirming that his father is also a magician and not the person he claims to be. Consequently, he frustratingly returns back to the king demanding for the truth. Without denial, his father confesses and admits that he is a magician. The young prince in distress demands, "I must know the truth, the truth beyond magic," yet upon the king's response, "there is no truth beyond magic" (535). This causes the young prince to panic and threatens to take his own life due to the unbearable sadness.

However, when the king summons Death to appear, the horrifying presence sends shivers down to his spine and he remembers "the beautiful but unreal islands and the unreal but beautiful princesses" and then rather chooses to live. In conclusion, the king wisely states "[y]ou see my son … you too now begin to be a magician" (536). Arguably, this story can imply that when individuals face the certainty of death as life's ultimate truth, it may not be completely wrong to consider opting for illusion, imagination, and fiction to delay the inescapable and cruel end of reality, which is death. Only true meaning is attained through life's flow and content. As Ralph Berets argues, "[t]his reality … leads only to the conclusion that death negates all of the illusions that man imposes on his experiences to make them meaningful" (1973: 93). Conchis' intricate sequence of tales to Nicholas is far from arbitrary; each short fabulation serves a philosophical purpose, to be aware and foster one's existential stance in life. To put together, much like the Swiss shepherd, individuals are initially challenged to find their element, to trust and explore themselves. Unlike De Deukans who has confined his life's purpose to a singular pursuit of possessing beautiful collections, Conchis broadens Nicholas' perceptive, encouraging him to become a magician and to welcome the conglomeration life that it offers, rather than the narrowed and shallow perception he puts himself in.

Once again, Conchis tries to reveal to Nicholas the shallowness and uncertainty of truth and make him perceive its multiplicity. As Wolfe reflects on the theme of the tale: "No reality underlies appearance; the phenomenon is all. Truth and reality do not exist objectively but inhere, instead in the perceiver" (1976: 119). This ambiguity comes in different shapes and forms, and the purpose of this act helps emphasize that reality is not naturally given but constructed. Thus, Conchis, embodying postmodern perspectives towards reality and truth, stresses on Nicholas/Prince to question the system and "accept the only reality the unreal reality of magic" (Onega, 1996: 4)

It is essential to recognize that *mise en abyme* is a significant means of self-reflectivity and recursion depth. In the novel, characters emulate their own narrative existence. As Nizhny Novgorod puts it, "*mise en abyme* is but an operator of ludic poetics and is narrowed to a mere process of creating a metafictional effect in a narrative" (2016: 39).

D. Metafiction and Self-Reflexivity: Lies Upon Lies

> "I had a strong feeling that something was slipping between me and reality."
> (Fowles, 1965: 121)

Metafictional qualities are noticeable throughout Part II of the novel, where texts mirror their own structure. The novel is self-reflexively positioned between the boundary of reality and imagination. As Hutcheon defines it, "[m]etafictions … is a fiction about a fiction-that is, fiction that includes within itself a *commentary* on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity" (1980: 1). In other words, the reader is constantly invited to be aware of the meaning that arises not from the plot alone. In metafiction, the narrative not only unfolds but also reflects on itself as an act of storytelling. This self-reflexive awareness becomes part of the story and can be in the form of a narrative which comments on its own structure. In *The Magus*, the reader is critically aware of the construction of the narrative, thereby, blurring the lines between reality and fiction. Moreover, as Patricia Waugh argues, "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality" (1984: 2). In other words, the reader becomes acutely aware that they are dragged into another story, intentionally reminding them of the work's fictionality. Moreover, Hutcheon, she mentions that,

> metafiction themselves argue that this fiction no longer attempts to mirror reality or to tell any truth about it … Fiction does not mirror reality; nor does it reproduce. It cannot. There is no pretence of simplistic mimesis in the historiographic metafiction. Instead, fiction is offered as another of the discourse by which we construct our version of reality." (1988: 40)

Metafiction actively engages the reader in its own creative process. It is no longer a passive imitation and representation of reality. It is acknowledging that reality is constructed and fabricated in a narrative. Subsequently, this section will analyse how metafictive elements in *The Magus* evoke scepticism in both Nicholas and readers towards Conchis' and Fowles' narratives. It will also explore how the novel calls upon the readers' attention to the artificiality of the narrative.

In *The Magus,* metafictional techniques are masterfully to stress the process of composition. Through the character of Conchis and his unreliable narrative, Fowles cunningly plays with and shifts perspectives. As the text foregrounds the process of composition, readers are deliberately infused into the plot. Confused by everything all together, they become active co-creators and participant in deciphering the mystery of the text. As Hutcheon explicates, metafictional texts' "explicit demands are made upon him [the reader] … for intellectual and affective responses comparable in scope and intensity to those of his life experience" (1980: 5). These texts do not necessarily focus on themselves but also actively engage with the external world. Similarly, *The Magus* blurs the distinction between the writer and the reader.

In the novel, Nicholas, oblivious of his illusions, seems to strictly delineate a clear boundary between fantasy and reality. As the novel is told in the first-person narrative, the occasional absence of introspective undoubtedly reflects Nicholas' own lack of self-awareness. Thus, one of the main purposes of Conchis' metafictional narrative is for the reader to reflect on the text like a detective. Waugh argues that "[t]he examination of fictionality, through the thematic exploration of characters 'playing roles' within fiction, is the most minimal form of metafiction" (1984: 116). And among the wide range of metafictional elements in the novel is Lily's blurring her identity, as she narrates, "I am not the real Lily. But I am not anyone impersonating the real Lily" (Fowles, 1965: 216). In the revised version, Lily hints to Nicholas that "[t]his is not the real world. These are not real relationships" (1977: 296). Moreover, Conchis indicatively avows, "[h]ere we are all actors. None of us are as we really are" (395). This is very self-reflexive commentary on the nature of the text. It invites the reader, and Nicholas, to put into reconsideration the nature of their identity and role within the fictional world. This metafictional self-reflexivity does not only blur the boundaries between reality and illusion, but also invites the reader to critically engage and question the narration's fictionality. In addition, for example, when Nicholas realizes that the story behind de Deukans is rather a reflection of Conchis and himself, he narrates:

> I had grasped the point that the *caractêre* of de Deukans; Conchis has been talking of himself and me; the parallels were too close for it be anything else. *And*

discouraged every kind of question… how unable I was to judge him … very few friends and no relations … (1965: 188)

This moment of realization exemplifies the metafictional awakening for self-awareness and self-reflexivity in Nicholas as he becomes more sceptical towards anyone he contacts to in this fictional world.

At a certain point in the novel, Nicholas grows sceptical and discontent with Conchis' deceitfulness. In an effort to regain Nicholas' trust, Conchis meticulously forges another backstory. Through this narrative, Conchis re-establishes a common ground with Nicholas by recounting a shared experience which involves a blinded man named Jansenist Henrik Nygaard in Norway. Henrik, a man who "was elect[ed], especially chosen to be punished and tormented" (302), is called for by his brother to be healed with modern treatment. However, the table turns when Conchis realizes that rationalism is not always the absolute anecdote, quoting:

> "Something was close to him … I did not know what he was seeing, but I knew it was something of such power, such mystery, that it explained all. And ofcourse Henrik's secret flashes in on me, almost like some reflection of the illumination that was flashing in on him. He was not waiting to meet God. He was meeting God"
>
> "Up to this point in my life … my whole approach was scientific … Here for the first time in my lie I was unsure of my standards, my belief, my prejudices. I knew the man out there on the point was having an experience beyond the scope of all my science and all my reason"
>
> "The net was nothing, reality burst through it. Perhaps something telepathic passed between Henrik and myself. I do not know." (1965: 307)

Conchis exclaims that this revelation with Henrik was ultimately the only time when he felt science, and reasons could not comprehend what had happened. It is a moment where the boundaries of reality seem to wash away and dissolve. Following this incident, Conchis declares that there is no shame in admitting, "*I do not know ...* I-do-not-know," (1965: 307). This admission and surrender to the unknown indeed becomes a source of strength as it insightfully opens the pathway to understand that ignorance can be bliss.

However, this story could be partly true and partly false. As it is recurrently mentioned throughout the novel, “I do not ask you to believe. All I ask you is to pretend to believe. Just pretend to believe. It will be easier” (Fowles, 1965: 139). This cyclical phrase serves as a metafictional element with a significant degree of self-consciousness about its fictionality. A self-reflexive element is when Nicholas utters “I had a strong feeling that something was slipping between me and reality” (121). Through Conchis’ related experience, Nicholas realizes that relying solely on reason is insufficient for his journey in Bourani. He gradually comprehends “that great passive, monster, reality, was no longer dead, easy to handle. It was full of mysterious vigour, new forms, new possibilities” (307). Through these multiple worlds and undefined realities, he realizes that reality is never fossilized due to its mysterious mystification, following that interpreting answer whilst unravelling a mystery will “always [be] a form of death” (618). In other words, trapped in the maze of mystery and meaning, Nicholas believes that even trying to describe the true nature of reality only ends up making it less clear. Even language fails to thoroughly capture the actual authentic means of representation. As Nicholas puts it, “[t]here was no meaning. Only being” (242). Hence, echoing the young prince’s story, he realizes that reality is partly subjective and partly objective.

VI. MADNESS BEYOND REASON

"For a while I let my mind wander into a bottomless madness."

(The Magus, 1965: 474)

A. Introduction

Postmodernist fictions frequently rely on scepticism, fragmentation, parody, irony, self-consciousness, self-reflexivity, *mise an abyme*, and other metafictional elements. *The Magus*, with its fragmented narrative, creates a maze-like fictional world in which we try to make sense. Yet, we only end up pondering and wandering between what is real and what is illusion. As Nicholas recounts, "[e]very truth at Bourani was a sort of lie; and every lie, a sort of truth," and there will never be a way of knowing the line between the two, for there are "no clues, no certainties, no sight, no reason, no motives" (1965: 294-6). This chapter will initially explore the concept of madness by analysing how Fowles, through Conchis, deliberately blurs the borderline between reality and illusion within the narrative structure. Consequently, because the novel invites both the reader and Nicholas to loss their sense of rationality, the generated madness in the novel merit scrutiny. It will argue that Nicholas experiences a split in his psyche, signifying his internal conflict and complexity between reality and fantasy. Furthermore, the chapter will demonstrate how madness vigorously reveals deeper insights into oneself and the world.

B. Scope of Madness in *The Magus*

Although madness is often seen as a negative or disruptive force, it can serve as an enlightening catalyst for understanding and self-awareness. In *The Magus,* through Conchis, Fowles deliberately blurs the borderline between reality and illusion, causing both the readers and Nicholas to loss their sense of rationality and enter a state of madness.

In *The Magus*, madness can be interpreted through various aspects, including the intertwining themes of reality, illusion, psychological manipulation, and Nicholas' journey towards his existential crisis. Conchis' orchestrated surreal scenarios lead Nicholas to inexorably question his sanity, perpetually wondering if he is witnessing real events or merely succumbing to hallucinations. This pervasive uncertainty and the inability to grasp or distinguish between what is real and what is not are enviably a sign of incipient madness. As elaborated in previous chapters, Conchis' insidious psychological games relentlessly push Nicholas to the furthest reaches of his mental and emotional limits. Driven by an irresistible force and an insatiable will to unravel the elusive truth, Nicholas is subjected to Conchis' incessant cycle of trust erosion and rebuilding, a process deliberately forged to disorient and destabilize his senses. This horrid manipulation only descends Nicholas into paranoia, hopelessly entrapping him in an unsettling maelstrom of inner chaos and madness. In fact, it can be argued that Fowles projects his own fragmented psyche and paranoid delusions onto the world of fiction, externalizing them as characters. As Aryan argues, "paranoia can be viewed as a creative energy which is directed and channelled through storytelling that helps the writer maintain a degree of control and agency which would otherwise be existentially threatening" (2023: 341).

Conchis dismantles Nicholas' perception of reality which exacerbates his psychological torment, making it increasingly difficult for him to distinguish between the fabricated and the authentic. Ultimately, Nicholas' descent into madness is marked by a sense of disillusionment and despair as he grapples with the ever-blurring boundaries of his own consciousness. Conchis' psychological machination serves not only to confuse the reader but also to lay bare the fragile and tenuous nature of human psyche. Undoubtedly, during the unfolding of Conchis' perplexing events, there are moments when both the reader and Nicholas believe they have neared some semblance of truth; yet, they only find themselves lost and ensnared in a perpetual cycle, swirling back into uncertainty on the fence of madness. As Nicholas narrates, "my sense of reality was like gravity. For a while I was like a man in space, whirling through madness" (1965: 224). According to Ernst von Glaserfeld, this convention is "a widespread ailment … casually connected with the belief that 'reality' is what it is, quite independent of us. Conchis demonstrates to Nicholas, and through Nicholas to us, that it is the experiencer who creates

his ‘facts,’ the relationships between them, and thus the structure that comes to consider real” (1979: 446). Conchis’ stories compel Nicholas to grow sceptical and question his collective grasp of reality. Rather than being grounded by the weight of truth, Nicholas describes being “like a man in space, spinning through madness” (1965: 224). Despite his repeated attempts to puzzle together his experiences into a coherent rational understanding of reality, they evidently prove inadequate and futile.

In *Madness, Language, Literature*, Michel Foucault points out the relationship between madness and the mirror in literature. As he argues, “[t]he thematic relationship between madness and the mirror in literature, in legends, and in folklore is a strange one. Looking at oneself in a mirror can lead to madness. Spend too much time in front of your mirror and you will see the devil” (2023: 44). In other words, madness in literature is a crucial aspect of exploring the human experience and self. This also reveals a thematic relationship between madness and mirror in literature, where the mirror serves as a metaphor for self-examination and introspection. However, gazing at oneself in the mirror for too long can lead to a certain level of madness, suggesting that excessive self-reflection may cause one to lose touch with reality. In *The Magus*, Fowles uses various literary elements to create a metaphorical kaleidoscopic labyrinth covered in mirrors, through which the reader and Nicholas self-reflexively examine themselves and the world around them. Fascinated by this kaleidoscopic labyrinth, Nicholas does not hold back from spending more time gazing into the mirrors. He endures by what he sees artistically either by Icarus, Minotaur, Othello, Iago, or Prospero. Similarly, through Nicholas’ lens in the story, readers are engagingly reflecting on their own emotions and experiences. Through this metaphorical mirroring, the novel becomes a form of double-edge sword. Although it may offer a powerful tool for self-reflection, it can make one lose touch with reality as the line between the inner world and external reality blurs, as Foucault pointed out.

Furthermore, with these self-reflexive novels, readers become active participants in the creation of the fictional world. They engage in the act of writing itself. Their role necessitates the recognition of quotations and allusions within the text to decode the references. Hutcheon explicates in her preface in *Narcissistic Narrative*, that this type of fiction is “[l]ike Narcissus in the Greek myth, the novel of today is intensely aware of its own existence, continuously drawing attention to its own storytelling process” (1980),

narcissistically and self-reflexively obsessed with its own state and construction. Hutcheon also argues that, in metafiction:

> [T]he reader lives in a world which he is forced to acknowledge as fictional. However, paradoxically the text also demands that he participates … This two-way pull is the paradox of the reader. The text's own paradox is that it is both narcissistically self-reflexive and yet focused outward, oriented toward the reader. (1980: 7)

This duality epitomizes the relationship between the text's self-awareness and its engagement with the reader. It invites readers to acutely be aware of its literary artifice. As Nicholas expresses in the revised version, "I saw Conchis as a sort of psychiatric novelist san novel, creating with people, not words" (1975: 253) and as a "psychiatric novelist," he creates a work of art that is only created by his active subjects.

Moreover, hyper-reflexivity or hype-awareness, a quintessential attribute of metafiction, epitomizes the fragmentation and dissolution of the self and psyche. As the narrative becomes intensely self-conscious, it incessantly draws attention to its own narrative structure. Such hyper-reflexivity incites profound introspection into the essence of identity. In *Madness and Modernism* (1992), Louis Sass defines hyper-reflexivity as "acute self-consciousness and self-reference, and by alienation from action and experience" (8). Therefore, as Aryan concludes, "the hyperreflexive person is alienated from their own thoughts, feelings, voices and consequently authorship" (2020: 125). For instance, is observing Conchis, Nicholas expresses that:

> I …. [am] trying to comprehend *the sadistic old man's duplicities*: to read his *palimpsest*. His "*theatre without an audience*" made no sense, it couldn't be the explanation. The one thing all actors and actresses craves was an audience. Perhaps what he was doing did spring in part from some theory of the theatre, but he has said it himself: *The masque is only a metaphor*. (1975: 475, emphasis added)

Arguably, this demonstrates a hyper-reflexive state of mind due to Conchis' reflection on the multifaceted nature of the "sadistic old man's duplicities," reaching out to unravel his "palimpsest." The reference to Conchis' "theatre without an audience" introduces a meta-theatrical feature which accentuates the aspect of life and narrative. This hyper-reflexive

nature of the "masque" underlines the narrative's self-consciousness. It is a metafictional metaphor which draws attention to its own construction and the performative act of reading. Hence, what Nicholas observes exemplifies a hyper-reflexive element, which reminds the reader of the narrative's self-consciousness and its artificiality.

C. Artistic Projection in *The Magus*

This section will analyse how Nicholas' split psyche signifies his internal conflict and inability to discern between reality and fantasy. First, it is essential to emphasize that "the existence of madness is different" (Foucault, 2023: 59), and in *The Magus* the notion of madness is multifaceted. This research argues that madness does not necessarily encompasses individuals with signs of mental disturbance/illness, but rather creatively exhibits aspects of human experiences. In other words, madness could be viewed not simply as a clinical diagnosis but also as a creative capacity. As Foucault argues, "madness is more to less secretly, more or less openly a principle of classification and organization; the standard of binary distribution that societies enact spontaneously between two regions of existence: reason and unreason" (2023: 59). In *The Magus*, madness pervades the entirety of Nicholas' experiences with Conchis' manipulative schemes and surreal settings. This reflection argues that Fowles projects parts of his own split psyche onto the main characters. Conchis and Nicholas artistically serve as a metaphorical embodiment of Fowles' internal conflict and preoccupation with split psyche. As explicated in the novel, it is "as if the island was split into dark and light" (Fowles, 1965: 61), traversing between sanity and madness, rationality and irrationality, consciousness and unconsciousness, reality and fiction. To use Foucault's terms, madness "reveal[s] a deeper and more hidden truth, one that was unknown to us. Madness reveals the invisible" (2023: 62). This implies that through the lens of madness, some forms of truth about human nature could be unveiled. In essence, fragmented and split psyche is central to Fowles' artistic creation of characters.

Nicholas experiences a psychological division since his days at Oxford, a period he describes, "I led two lives … I went on leading a double life in the Army, queasily playing at being Brigadier 'Blazer' Urfe's son in public, and nervously reading *Penguin New Writing* and poetry pamphlets in private" (1965: 10). From the beginning of the novel,

Nicholas' struggle between a superficial existence and an emerging self-awareness is palpable. His life at Oxford is marked by emotional dissociation and numbness, while hiding behind a mask of cynicism and indifference. Nicholas' inner turmoil and the personas he adapts around his surroundings can be elucidated through Laing's concept of the divided self. In his work, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness*, Laing expounds on how individuals compartmentalize their identity:

> The central split is between … 'own' self and what he called his 'personality'. This dichotomy is encountered again and again. What the individual variously terms his 'own', 'inner', 'true', 'real', self is experienced as divorced from all activity that is observable by another, what David called his 'personality'. One may conveniently call this 'personality' the individual's 'false self or a 'false-self system'. The reason I suggest that one speaks of a *false-self* system is that the 'personality', false self, mask, 'front', or persona that such individuals wear may consist in an amalgam of various part-selves, none of which is so fully developed as to have a comprehensive 'personality' of its own. (1960: 73)

Laing suggests that individuals may develop a sense of "false-self system" which prompts them to adopt various personas or masks in different contexts. These personas serve as defense mechanisms against perceived threats to shield their true identity. Additionally, according to Laing, this divided self can lead to distortion of identity and incomplete development. Nicholas admits that, "I did absorb a small dose of one permanently useful thing, Oxford's greatest gift to civilized life: Socratic honesty" (1965:11). This concept, rooted in philosophical inquiry and self-examination, pushes him to confront his hollow existence. Acknowledging emptiness is a pivotal moment for Nicholas. As he puts it, "[b]ordom, the numbing annual predictability of life … it was real boredom" (1965:11). This realization makes him receptive to the call that signals his slow psychic growth and eventual interrogation. In *Man and His Symbol*, Carl Gustave Jung argues that:

> There is a world of difference between a conscious decision to split off and temporarily supress a part of one's psyche, and a condition in which this happens spontaneously, without one's knowledge or consent and even against one's

> intention. The former is a civilized achievement, the patter a primitive "loss of a soul." (1964: 25)

Disruption in consciousness can lead to a deeper, though challenging, path towards psychological wholeness.

Madness, as illustrated in *The Magus* through Conchis and Nicholas, vigorously reveals deeper insights into oneself and the world. There are numerous incidents when Nicholas believes he is hallucinating or dreaming, especially after encountering several mystical figures running around the island. It is clear that Conchis subjects Nicholas to various psychological games. Nicholas' mental state exemplifies what Louis Sass calls "double bookkeeping":

> It is remarkable to what extent even the most disturbed schizophrenics may retain, even at the height of their psychotic periods, a quite accurate sense of what would generally be considered to be their objective or actual circumstances. Rather than mistaking the imaginary for the real, they often seem to live in two parallel but separate worlds: consensual reality and the realm of their hallucinations and delusions … a patient who asserts that the people around him are phantoms or automatons still interacts with them as if they were real. (1995: 21)

Much like the schizophrenic patient described by Sass, Nicholas demonstrates a state of "double bookkeeping." Nicholas is aware that the experience he is subjected to is part of Conchis' manipulation. Yet, he continues to get swayed and engage with them. For instance, at Nicholas' second visit, he encounters a ghost-like figure: "a pale shape at the far end of the house move up the steps and under the colonnade. I could not see well … a flowing whiteness, a long coat or a dressing gown … I suspected, too that I had been meant to see her" (1965, 120). He oscillates between scepticism and belief, between perceived reality and illusion, similar to schizophrenic patients who wander between their delusions and real-life.

Moreover, the ghost-like figure is not the only figure Nicholas encounters. He also encounters Apollo and a satyr chasing after a nymph, who is later rescued by a strikingly beautiful goddess: "[s]he stood, cold and outraged and ominous for a long second, and

then she reached back with her free hand and with a venomous quickness pulled an arrow out of the quiver," and kills Apollo after that, they withdraw into the shadows "as if nothing had happened" (Fowles, 1965: 188). In addition, Conchis introduces Nicholas to people from his past who are believed to be dead. For example, Nicholas sees Lily Montagmery, whom Conchis had informed had died in the 20's. During another stroll through the village, Nicholas meets de Deukans, whom Conchis had also mentioned to be deceased. In a state of confusion, Nicholas struggles to understand whether he is experiencing hallucinations, delusions, and wavering on the brink of madness. This is an indication that Nicholas is projecting and externalising parts of his own split psyche onto the external world. In other words, seeing these figures indicates that he has lost a unified sense of the self and agency, and he is hallucinating. Fowles writes at a moment of "contestation of clear authorial agency and intention ... [and] a dissolution of the humanist conceptualisation of authorship" (Aryan, 2019: 108). Conchis vigorously positions Nicholas on the borderline between illusion and reality, past and present. Conchis' godgame reaches its most impactful point, by having Nicholas dangerously relive the experiences of the Nazi's horror. This demonstrates that Nicholas has a traumatised psyche due to the horror and therefore lacks a unified self and psyche. For instance, Nicholas, on his way back from Bourani, gets caught and taken prisoner by German soldiers:

> A young man, evidently Greek, rather short. His face was atrociously bruised, puffed the whole of one side covered in blood from a gash near the right eye… hardly able to walk…I had a swift acrid stab of terror, that this really was some village boy they had got hold of and beaten up—not someone to look the part, but be the part … *I knew by then where I was. I was back in 1943,* ten years before; I was looking at captured Resistance fighters. (1965: 367, emphasis added)

Conchis successfully manages to blur the lines, risking great lengths to rapture Nicholas' sense of rationality. In "Hegel, Nietzsche, and Frued on Madness and the Unconscious" (1991), Daniel Berthold-Bond articulates Hegels' anatomy of madness. As he puts it, it "is in many respects the inverted mirror of the developed consciousness, incorporating the structures of rationality within a different construction of the relation between the self and its world" (1991: 193). Subsequently, Conchis employs madness as a tool to reconfigure Nicholas' mundane outlook in the relationship between himself and the world around him.

At this point, Nicholas knows that these hallucinations are no more than a part of Conchis' game within a game. Conhcis confesses to be an experimental drama known as the "metatheater" (19656: 396), a "theatre without an audience" (448). Through these intricate and somewhat distasteful manipulative games, how Conchis pushes Nicholas to the edge of madness. In so doing, Conchis enables him to make better choices. Furthermore, Conchis stages Bourani as a recreation, a parallel imitation of art, history and literature, of an imaginative alternative:

> [M]adness plays a dual role: it shows the truth of things and people; it denounces and reveals; and at the same time, it serves as an image of literature, a kind of double within it … as if literature doubled itself and observed itself though the play of madness; as if madness held a mirror up to literature in which it saw itself reflected. The role of madness is not only to reveal, as if by a trick, the truth of things but to also express the truth of literature, theatre, the novel (Foucault, 2023: 62).

Promptly, as Conchis discloses, "I conceived a new kind of drama. One in which the conventional relationships between actors and audiences were forgotten … In which the continuity of performance, either in time or place, was ignored. And in which the action, the narrative was fluid" (Fowles, 1965: 395). Hence, within his meta-theatre, the actors solely dictate their own destinies, and so should Nicholas. In the revised version, Conchis also warns Nicholas that "[w]e are all actors here, my friend. None of us is what we really are. We all lie some of the time, and some of us all the time" (Fowles, 1977: 420), emphasizing that everyone participating in the act is unreliable and untrustworthy. Conchis points out that, "[w]e are all actors and actresses, Mr. Urfe. You included" (1965: 180). Out of pure curiosity, Nicholas is willing to participate in the metatheatre: "[a]fter all, it was a masque, and I wanted, or after a plan very short while began to want, to play my part" (1965: 174). In other words, Nicholas is willing to welcome madness in pursuit of meaning and progression. This madness enables Nicholas to explore the quality of life. It also allows him to become more receptive to possibilities and embrace the freedom of self and the multiplicity of life's meaning.

Nicholas believes that the mysteries in Bourani are merely for his aesthetics enjoyment. Yet, with each unfolding event, he gradually comes to suspect that the godgame conceals a stupendous metaphor:

> [A]ll my life I had tried to turn life into fiction, to hold reality away; always I had acted as if a third person was watching and listening and giving me marks for good or bad behaviour—a godlike novelist, to whom I turned, like a character with the power to please, the sensitivity to feel slighted, the ability to adapt himself to whatever he believed the novelist-god wanted … I had always been incapable of acting freely. (1965: 521)

Right at this very moment, Nicholas accepts that he will never be able to unravel the mystery behind Bourani, and that the unknown is only "the great motivating factor in all human existence," which is a fundamental driving force of life (1977: 302). Therefore, as this passage indicates, one can only explore the metaphors that attempt to explain one's existence.

VII. CONCLUSION

To recapitulate, *The Magus* by John Fowles is one of the transformative postmodern works that intricately delves themes of deception, illusion, and reality. This study focused on examining, through the protagonist Nicholas Urfe, how Fowles criticizes and juxtaposes modern ideals of rationalism and objectivity. The novel's labyrinthine narrative directly challenges the stability of truth and final meaning. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that *The Magus* not only constructs a language maze that vigorously blur Nicholas' perception of reality and illusion but can also arguably be seen as a story that drives Nicholas to a state of madness prompting his personal transformation and character development. The thematic and structural narrative of the novel is characterized by postmodernist techniques such as intertextuality, metafiction, *mise en abyme*, and *différance* which continually delays both Nicholas and the readers into a language maze of illusions, blurring the borderlines between reality and fiction. With a deconstructive approach, the novel invites reader to analyse this language maze of rich metaphors, allusions, and self-reflexivity to experience the elusive instability of fixed meanings, delayed truth and the centrality of language in shaping the human psyche.

Chapter one provided a comprehensive exploration of postmodern literature, highlighting its fundamental principles, innovative techniques, and implications for literary theory and practice. It highlights the emergence of postmodern literature as a defiant movement that challenges the notion of universal truths and embraces the multiplicity of perspectives and meaning. Central to postmodern literature is its rejection of overarching narratives and its celebration for diversity and ambiguity. As exemplified by John Fowles' novel *The Magus,* these works blur distinction between the aesthetics and the real, employing self-reflexivity and narratives complexity to provoke introspection. *The Magus* embodies a postmodern sensibility in every aspect, rather than unfolding in a straightforward manner, it unravels chaotically and fragmentally. Through

the lens of *différance*, a concept elucidated by Jacques Derrida, postmodern literature emphasizes the dynamic and contingent nature of singular authoritative interpretation. Postmodernism's approach, as argued by Roland Barthes and others, places the reader in a pivotal role as co-creators of meaning, which reinforces the idea that a text's significance is not fixed but evolves drastically through a wave of diverse interpretations. Furthermore, Linda Hutcheon's study of 'historiographic metafiction' analysis how postmodern literature engages with history, not as a fixed true narrative but a series of contested discourses. Hence by destabilizing grand narrative and questioning establishes hierarchies, one can reflect critically on construction of historical reality; for examples, when Nicholas encounters various and multiple versions of events, and these orchestrated events involve historical reenactments that challenges Nicholas' perception of reality and history. In essence, postmodern literature represents a radical departure from conventional storytelling to welcoming hybridity and uncertainty as an essential element of artistic expression.

Chapter two provides an analysis into the complexities of meaning through the lens of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction philosophy, as applied to the novel, *The Magus*. Firstly, it elaborates Derrida's critique on structuralism, particularly dismantling conventional binary opposition. And his concept of *différance*, which perfectly serves as a framework to decipher Conchis' character and the narrative structure within the novel. In this chapter, it argues that Conchis embodies Derrida's constructive methods to manipulate Nicholas through layers of illusion and uncertainties, by delaying Nicholas' perception of truth and reality. Like Derrida's critique of structuralist hierarchies, Conchis constantly blurs between fact and fiction, presence and absence, creating a narrative maze where meaning is unceasingly deferred and postponed. As part of Conchis' godgame, Derrida's concept fundamentally builds the infrastructure to Nicholas journey, where his understanding of love, identity and truth is evolving, and that is for instance his experience with Conchis' deceptive games and Lily's shifting identity continually differentiated. Central to Derrida's philosophy is the idea of trace, which refers to the clues left by the interplay of signifier and signified. And in *The Magus*, Conchis' manipulative techniques reflects upon Derrida's notion of the trace by misleading and disrupting Nicholas' sense of reality. For instance, when Nicholas encounter visual and auditory traces that delays

and blur the line between what is real and what is illusion. This analysis proves Derrida's concept that these given traces are not just physical acts but also evoke the nature complexity of emptions and memories, which explores the fluidity and ambiguity of creating meaning. Here Fowles exemplifies Derrida's theory in practice, revealing how language and narrative can destabilize singularity, as the non-linear narrative and shifting realities clearly mirrors upon Derrida's *différance*.

Chapter three presents an in-depth analysis of the concept of intertextuality, first by introducing its origins and then its developing influences by postmodern theorists within the postmodern framework. For instance, Julia Kristeva's emphasis on the interconnectedness of texts and how every word or text is chained or intersected with other words or texts. Similar to Rolands Barthes' notion of a text as a "tissue of quotations" (1977: 146), which explores the inherit intertextual nature of any literary work that has ever existed. Defying the conventional perception of originality, Fowles infuses intertextual elements to create a multivocal narrative that challenges notions of originality and authorship. Infusing T. S. Eliot's poem, "Little Gidding" plays a significant starting point of intersecting intertextual reference. As these lines reflects the novel's structure and themes that defies the notion of authenticity, and Nicholas being the subject of response, his comparison to mythological figures like Icarus, Theseus, or Minotaur, metaphorically illustrates his entrapment in a maze of intertextual references, in which it mirrors his psychological expedition. Conchis' hypocrite rejection of fiction in favour of truth is contrasted when Nicholas starts to grow critically sceptical towards anything that is being uttered by Conchis. For this chapter argues how Conchis manipulates the use of intertextuality to his advantage to guide Nicholas towards self-awareness and introspective. Moreover, Fowles draws heavily from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Othello* to create a manipulating approach which constantly shift Nicholas' understanding of his role, whether as Ferdinand, Caliban or even Iago. These parallels between Nicholas and Shakespearean characters reinforces the idea that texts are not isolated entity but are instead part of a continuum by pre-existing works. This intertextual approach aligns with Barthes' concept that a text's unity lies in its destination rather that its origin. Fowles additionally and playfully uses ironic self-parody to add a twist to Nicholas' self-awareness on his reliability of self-identity: to criticize, to challenge and to defy rather

passively personify whatever role Conchis bestows upon him. Through the lens of intertextuality, without a doubt, *The Magus* is a rich textile of interwoven metaphors, allusions, and sea of meanings.

Chapter four provides a comprehensive study of the narrative technique known as *mise en abyme,* emphasizing its role and interplay between reality and fiction in *The Magus*. The chapter analysis how Fowles utilizes *mise en abyme* to manipulatively shift Nicholas' reality through Conchis' multi-layered fiction within a fiction, revealing how fiction and reality are mutually reflective constructs that continuously reshape one another. As discussed, *mise en abyme* is a self-reflective narrative that introduces mini stories within a larger narrative. It can arguably be seen that Conchis acts as both a character and a narrative device that mirrors the larger theme of the novel. For Conchis' tales, such as the story of the Swiss Shepherd, Alphonse de Deukans, and the fairytale "The Prince and the Magician," serve as a prime example of *mise en abyme* in the novel. Each story within a story, which is constructed by Conchis, mirrors Nicholas' own journey to metaphorically challenge his perception of reality, truth, and self. As the tale of the Swiss Shepherd reflects upon the flawed ideal of finding happiness in solitude. This is to compel Nicholas to question his romanticized perception of loneliness, suggesting that no one is an island, and that isolation leads to despair rather than fulfilment. The story of Alphonse de Deukans further exemplifies this mirroring effect. De Deukans' obsessive act of collecting and eventual downfall serve as an allegory for Nicholas' own selfishness and objectification of women. This narrative within the narrative acts as a catalyst, a self-reflection of living a life devoid of heart-to-heart human connections and owned-up responsibilities urging him to clearly reflect on narcissistic flaws. "The Prince and the Magician" is another narrative that serves as a backbone narrative that reflects on Nicholas' own life. The story stresses on the prince's journey to be shaped by perception and belief, to discover and accept the illusory nature of reality and life's inherent uncertainties, "there is no truth beyond magic" (1965: 535). This revelation strikes as an existential crisis, compelling Nicholas/Prince to choose the complexities and ambiguity of life over the mundane certainty of death. As a result, these fiction within a fiction engages readers in a self-reflexive narrative that continually blurs the lines between reality and fiction. For characters like Conchis and Lily exemplify unreliable and ambiguous

stories, promoting both Nicholas and the readers to question the authenticity of their existences. Subsequently, this heightens the awareness of truth and reality's constructed nature, suggesting that reality is fluid and shaped by subjective interpretation. Hence, this interplay between fiction and reality highlights the limitations of language and reason in fully capturing the essence of existence is often found in embracing uncertainty and mystery.

Chapter five attempts to complete the gap of this study by demonstrating how postmodernist themes such as scepticism, fragmentation, and self-reflexivity are employed to blur the line between what is real and what is illusion, leading Nicholas to verge of madness. Arguably, Fowles uses Conchis to create this maze-like fictional world to disorient both Nicholas' and the reader's ability to rationalize, which invites them to a language maze of madness. This chapter argues how Conchis' surreal scenarios has descended Nicholas to a state madness to dive deep into his inner conflicts and consciousness. Not only through intertextuality, mise en abyme, and metafiction, but also through vigorous psychological torment, Conchis brings forth Nicholas' tenuous grasp on reality and his existential struggle to find purposeful meaning. Furthermore, madness in *The Magus* serves not only as a narrative device but also as a thematic exploration, providing a mirror for characters and readers to examine their own psyche and the nature of reality. As this descent into madness, characterized by hallucinations and psychological manipulation, can arguably serves as a form of artistic expression, with both Nicholas and Conchis embodying Fowles' own fragmented psyche. Thereby, this chapter explores Fowles portrayal of postmodern madness, to be a dual force that disrupts and enlightens self-awareness and existential understanding. As the novel's intricate narrative and thematic depth resonate with postmodern themes of uncertainty and the perpetual quest for meaning in this ambiguous world.

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RESUME

Education:

Degree	University	Programme	Year
Bachelor	Arab Open University	English Language and Literature	2019
Master	Istanbul Aydın University	English Language and Literature	2024

Experience:

Institution	Profession	Year
Human Zone Institution.	English Tutor	2018
INNOVA International School	English Teacher	2019-2021

Master Thesis: The Language Maze In John Fowles' *The Magus*

Publication: "The Labyrinth of Language and Madness in John Fowles' The Magus". https://www.ijsr.net/getabstract.php?paperid=SR24710173827

Skills/Interests: Teaching, Reading, Writing.
Literature, Language, Education, Art.
Postmodernism Literature

AUGUST, 2024 Enas M. ELASHI