

THESIS ABSTRACT

In John Fowles's novel *The Magus*, the protagonist Nicholas Urfe is subject to a series of metatheatrical illusions created by a Greek eccentric recluse named Maurice Conchis, the eponymous magus of the title. Increasingly crueller and more surreal, the tricks and peculiar performances are parts of a scheme designed to rouse Nicholas from his life of egotistical freedom and existential inauthenticity.

The employment of myths and masks plays a vital role in Nicholas's "initiation" and in the overall theme of the novel. The thesis and aim of this work is to illustrate, on the various techniques in which the mentioned myths and masks are exploited, both in the immediate plot and Nicholas's narrative voice, the interrelations of mythologies and masks with the inauthenticity of Nicholas's existence. Through the analysis of *The Magus*, this text will focus on the means in which the theatrical disguises work as an extension of Urfe's own social masks.

The first part of the thesis addresses the connection of classical mythology with the modern understanding of myth, including its use in existential drama and 20th century philosophical and psychological theories. The second part of the thesis considers the early work of the British author John Fowles and draws the connection between the existential aspects of his literary creation and the previously mentioned theories, illustrating so through the author's debut novel and a collection of philosophical aphorisms. The third and concluding part of the thesis focuses on the analysis of *The Magus*, in which it will address the position of the proposed themes in the context of its narrative, emphasizing its overall importance in Fowles's literary work.