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TEXTUAL RE-CREATIONS: A STUDY OF INTERTEXTUALITY IN JOHN FOWLES'S *THE COLLECTOR*

Autora

Belén Bruna Marzo

Directora

Mª Jesús Martínez Alfaro

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras / Estudios Ingleses

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The aim of this essay is to carry out an intertextual reading of John Fowles's novel *The Collector* (1963). In doing so, I will try to highlight the important role of intertextuality not only in the creative process of constructing and writing the story, but also when it comes to the reader's interpretation of its characters and themes. In what follows, the study of intertextuality in *The Collector* begins with an introductory section dealing with the author and his work and situating them in context. I also discuss here the concept of intertextuality and briefly explain the way it functions in the novel's different sections. After this introduction, I analyse more in depth what I regard as the novel's main intertexts by delving into how they contribute to characterisation and plot development. The last section rounds up the analysis by commenting on the wide intertextual net that can be built around *The Collector* and it also includes a reflection on the figure of John Fowles as a moralist.

I. INTRODUCTION

Regarded as one of most outstanding British writers of the twentieth century, John Fowles has been described as "a novelist writing into a mirror so that each of his works reflects back upon his own mind and vision." (Palmer 3) His novels, which recurrently approach in different ways the conflict between individual psychology and social conventions, earned both critical respect and popular success. The work that constitutes the focus of this essay, *The Collector*, perfectly fits this general description of Fowles's literary production, and it has other ingredients which drew me to it, like its claustrophobic atmosphere, its well-sustained tension, typical of a psychological thriller, and the fact that its apparently simple plot turns out to be deeply revealing of the human condition.

John Fowles was born in 1926 in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England, and grew up in a middle-class family. Of his hometown he says that it was a place "dominated by conformism —the pursuit of respectability." (qtd. in Lyall) He had nothing in common with his parents and no one in his family had any literary interests or artistic skills at all: "When I was a young boy my parents were always laughing at 'the fellow who couldn't draw' —Picasso. Their crassness horrified me." (qtd. in Lyall) Years later he would find in literature a refuge and a way to escape the intellectual numbness of his family and the oppressiveness of a society which he saw as increasingly defined by conventionality.

While studying French at Oxford, he was captivated by French existentialism and his admiration for figures like Sartre and Camus inspire much of what lies behind his novels. In my view, existentialism is the major influence on Fowles, in what regards not only his worldview and attitudes to life but also his literary production. He explicitly acknowledged this on more than one occasion, as when he pointed out in an interview: "I quite like that philosophy as a structure in a novel and in a sense I still use it."[1] (Onega, *Form and Meaning* 180) The influence of existentialism can be seen in the treatment of certain recurrent themes in his novels, such as the quest for self-identity, free will and individual choice, the value of art, the role of the artist in society, etc.

Fowles moved forward the English realist tradition and paved the way for postmodernism. He is considered by critics as both a realist writer and an innovative metafictionalist. This has to do with the fact that, in spite of his openly acknowledged admiration for the French *nouveau roman*, he also admitted feeling the pressure that the "crushing sort of [English] realistic tradition" exerted on his work (qtd. in Onega, *Form and Meaning* 32). With these words, as Onega points out, "Fowles places himself in the

[1] The interview, entitled "Fowles on Fowles", is included as an "Appendix" (175-90) in Susana Onega's *Form and Meaning in the Novels of John Fowles* (1989). It was first published in *Actas del X Congreso Nacional de A.E.D.E.A.N.* (1988). Quotations from the interview in this essay are from Onega's work.

situation David Lodge so eloquently described for the modern writer in *The Novelist at the Crossroads.*" (32)

This work by Lodge, published in 1969, described the situation of the contemporary writer as standing at a crossroads, wondering about the alternatives to a sort of realism that appeared to be used up. Lodge was referring here to the literature of "The Movement" and the "Angry Young Men", and more specifically, in as far as the novel genre is concerned, to the "provincial" or "angry" novels which dominated the literary panorama in England after World War II and which significantly departed from modernist experimentation and opacity in favour of a more "democratic" style. As Lodge explains: "That wave of enthusiasm for the realistic novel in the fifties has, however, considerably abated" (100). Thus, writers stand at the crossroads in the face of an apparently exhausted form (the path followed so far, the realism that returned in the 1950s) and many of them use that hesitation to go ahead, precisely by building it into novels which self-consciously reflect on literary conventions that are there only to be undermined. This is exactly what Fowles does: he relies on established genres and well-known conventions and uses them in a different way, thus giving a postmodernist twist to already-known, and fairly used-up, forms. This dynamics is best seen in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969), apparently a Victorian novel whose twentieth-century narrator departs from the omniscient voice typical of nineteenth-century realism and whose metafictional games find expression, for instance, in the subversion of closure, replaced here by an open ending that offers the reader different alternatives at the end of the narrative.

A work of fiction is a fantasy, an invented world whose power lies to an important extent in its connection with the real world. Credibility and verisimilitude are a possible way to make the reader engage with the fictional work s/he is reading. These are

ingredients that Fowles favours, as he suggests when he points out that his characters "must be credible human beings even if the circumstances they are in are 'incredible'. But even the story, no matter how bizarre, no matter what symbolism is involved, has to be possible." (Newquist 6) This holds true for *The Collecto*r (1963), his first published novel. Frederick Clegg is a solitary mediocre clerk who collects butterflies. Miranda Grey is a beauty and an intelligent art student, loved by family and friends. Clegg kidnaps her and imprisons her in his basement, which leads to the novel's recreation of an intense physical, psychological, and cultural duel where captor and captive establish a thought-provoking relationship. Clegg narrates the events retrospectively, as a confession of sorts, and, inserted in his narrative and framed by it, is Miranda's diary, which she writes during her imprisonment until her illness and final death. The plot is not complex and the characters are few, the story-world is fairly limited, apparently simple, and, regarding form, the novel cannot be said to be highly demanding. However, one is able to perceive in Fowles's first novel the already-mentioned combination of

> the French (or innovating) and the English (or traditional) influences simultaneously at work at every level, linguistic, structural, and thematic: the deft handling of the confession, the diary and the letter conventions, the pastiche-like quality of the cliché-ridden language of Clegg, together with constant references to literature […], the startling use of time and space, the *mise en abyme* Miranda's metadiscourse represents […] show Fowles's ability to reach beyond the boundaries of the Western tradition of fiction into experimentalism. (Onega, *Form and Meaning* 32-33)

Some of Onega's remarks above refer to intertextuality, which will be analysed in this essay as something that shapes the narrative, defines each character's personality, and adds extra layers of meaning to the situations and themes dealt with in the story. Intertextuality in *The Collector* is not a superfluous ornament, but a means for the reader

to interpret the novel in all its complexity as it provides characters and themes with a depth that both complicates and enriches the narrative.

The term "intertextuality" was coined by Julia Kristeva in her essays "Word, Dialogue and Novel" and "The Bounded Text", which came out in the same decade *The Collector* was published.[2] Her theory of intertextuality posits the text as a full dynamic site of relational processes rather than a flat product or static structure. As she explains in "Word, Dialogue, and Novel", "the literary word is an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning), as a dialogue among several writings." She claims that "any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another." (37) Just as Kristeva developed the theories of Bakhtin, many critics have in turn developed the theory put forward by Kristeva, including Genette, Derrida, Barthes, Riffaterre and many others.[3]

These theories of intertextuality throw light on Fowles's novel but, as he says, he ignores theory when drafting the text: "I suppose my partial knowledges of Barthes, Kristeva, and so on are like bunkers in a golf course […]. But I'd doubt if anyone plays golf just to think about bunkers. I'm not unaware of them, but don't feel they have much to do with writing. I dislike in a novel a too overt use of theory." (Vipond 205) And yet, even if he disregards theory when writing, his works do illustrate the main tenet of intertextuality: that every text is a dynamic conglomeration of other texts, as can be clearly seen in *The Collector*. The book's title refers to collecting, more specifically, to Clegg's collecting butterflies, and then women. In a sense, Fowles is also playing the role of a collector. He "collects" and includes in the text other literary works, implicitly related to the plot and the characters, or explicitly made present by means of allusions

[2] In *Desire in Language*, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" is dated in 1966 and "The Bounded Text" in 1966-67. Both essays appeared in her first volume of essays *Reserches pour une sémanalyse* in 1969.

[3] Jay Clayton and Eric Rothstein's edited volume *Influence and Intertextuality in Literary History* (1991) offers a clarifying analysis of the concepts of influence and intertextuality, as well as an account of the main figures that have contributed to the development of the theory of intertextuality.

and direct references. But unlike Clegg's collecting activities, infused by death, Fowles blows new life into the texts of the past and makes his novel a dynamic site of intertextual connections.

Before advancing any further, though, something must be said about the way in which intertextuality works in the book's different sections. As we move from one section to the next, narrative voice and point of view change from Clegg to Miranda and then to Clegg again. Considering the differences in form and meaning between these sections, intertextuality can be said to be a good means to convey the gulf that separates the main characters and their respective attitudes to life. In important respects, intertextuality works differently in the sections narrated by each character on account of their psychological traits, as well as their background and education. Miranda is a lively young student who has good knowledge of art and literature, as her narrative shows. By contrast, Clegg's narrative is flat and unemotional in a way that suggests a psychopathic personality, while also revealing certain shortcomings which are partly due to his working-class origins and non-conformist upbringing, but also related to his growing up without affection. He is not interested in art or literature at all. The only book he explicitly mentions is a work on the secrets of the Gestapo. Other intertextual links can of course be established by the reader —for instance, by linking his narrative with the confessional genre— but they are not accounted for by the character's references to literature. The opposite is the case with Miranda's narrative. Literature —books she read in the past and books Clegg supplies her with— shields her from the harsh circumstances she is going through. She uses her readings and also the writing of a diary as a means to self-examination, an aid in her search for meaning and a true self. In order to better understand herself and her situation, she often establishes links with fictional characters, such as, among others, Jane Austen's heroines and the protagonists of William

Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Just as a literary work has no meaning in itself, a person may not be able to define/understand him/herself in isolation, but only in relation to others, including literary/fictional others.

To conclude, I would like to briefly refer to the relevant role of the reader in intertextual interpretation. Riffaterre defines the literary phenomenon as not only the text, but also its reader and all the reader's possible reactions to the text. He claims that there is only one correct reading and that this is the intertextual method that guides the reader in his/her interpretation (3). It is impossible to get the "true" or "complete" meaning of a text and, if each reader reads a text differently, these differences become greater if his/her interpretation is predicated, as Riffaterre argues, on an intertextual reading. Reading a text that is rich in intertextual connections requires a competent reader who notices and understands them. But the reader can establish more intertextual links than those intended by the writer, and these also vary from reader to reader. Intertextuality is a wide concept whose workings involve the writer and the text, but, in contrast with the older concept of influence, it confers on the reader a great deal of relevance and autonomy. My attempt in the following sections is to provide my own intertextual interpretation, as a reader, of John Fowles's *The Collector*.

II. THE MANY AND THE FEW: *The Collector*, *The Aristos* and Fowles's Critique of the Realist Novel of the 1950s

As pointed out in the introduction, an intertextual reading of the novel helps the reader to go beyond a superficial interpretation and better understand the work in its complexity. In this section, I will try to do so by approaching Fowles's novel in the light of two sets of intertexts, thus relating *The Collector* to: firstly, Fowles's personal philosophy, as explained above all in *The Aristos* and, secondly, the preceding tradition, that of the

realist novel of the 1950s. In dealing with these intertexts, I will also comment on one of the novel's key themes, as shown in this section's title.

A few months after the publication of *The Collector*, Fowles expressed his surprise at the way in which British critics had misinterpreted the central message of the novel by describing it as mere crime fiction (Newquist 221). According to the author, the main point he wanted to deal with was the confrontation between the Many and the Few, between the working class that came to maturity under the Labour Party and the Welfare State —what Miranda's mentor G.P. calls "the New People, the new-class people with […] their stupid crawling imitation of the bourgeoisie"[4]— and an elite mainly formed by artists and intellectuals who were sceptical about the implications of the economic growth and social improvement that most welcomed uncritically. Linked with this is Fowles's critique of the realist novel of the 1950s, featuring protagonists that are far from Fowles's ideal individual, whom he sees as belonging to a minority that commits existential acts —acts that show a determination to resist those systems of thought, social and political pressures that attempt to rob him/her of his/her individuality. This sets those individuals (the Few) apart from the unthinking masses (the Many).

Published in 1964, and originally subtitled "A Self-Portrait in Ideas", *The Aristos* contains Fowles's views on human nature, art, religion, philosophy, etc. As he explains in the preface to the 1968 edition, the main theme in this book can be traced back to the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, who "saw mankind divided into a moral and intellectual *élite* (the *aristoi*, the good ones, *not* —this is a later sense— the ones of noble birth) and an unthinking, conforming mass —*hoi polloi*, the many." (9, original emphasis) As Fowles puts it here, in *The Collector* he tried to analyse, through a parable, some of the consequences of the above-mentioned confrontation between the Few and the Many (10),

[4] John Fowles, *The Collector* (London: Vintage, 2004), 207. Hereafter quotations from the novel will be identified as *TC*, followed by page number in parenthetical references.

which he illustrates through the relationship between the novel's main characters. Clegg, who represents the Many, grew up in a humble household and far from enabling environment. He gets rich after winning the pools, but a feeling of social inferiority colours his personality. Apathetic and unemotional, he has no moral conscience and no intellectual interests. By contrast, Miranda is capable of moral judgement, compromise and self-examination; she is learned and aware of the value of art to the individual and to society; she aspires to freedom of thought and authenticity of self; and, in a word, she has many of the traits of the prototypical aristos, best represented in the novel by G.P., an irreverent painter who is twenty years older than Miranda and who teaches her not only about art but also about what it means to live authentically. To Fowles, the dissatisfaction haunting the individual has to do with the loss of our "most fundamental birth right, that is, to have a self-made opinion in all that concerns us." Miranda represents the "quest to preserve the freedom of the individual against all those pressures-to-conform that threaten our century." (*The Aristos* 7, 8) Whereas she is in search of authenticity, Clegg lives an inauthentic life, somehow reflected by his cliché-ridden language. He imitates and uses others' criteria rather than his own judgement:

> Once I let myself dream I hit her [Miranda] across the face as I saw it done by a chap in a telly play. (*TC* 11)
>
> I remembered an American film I saw once (or was it a magazine) about a man who took a drunk girl home and undressed her and put her to bed, nothing nasty he just did that and no more and she woke up in his pyjamas. So I did that. (*TC* 87)
>
> Then I knelt and said a prayer…not that I believe in religion, but it seemed right. (*TC* 274)

During her imprisonment, Miranda considers her attitudes, opinions, actions, etc., up to the time she was kidnapped, thus delving into what she is like and also reflecting on what she should be like. Fowles describes Miranda as a heroine on her way to become an aristos, one of the Few: "she is an existentialist heroine although she doesn't know it. She

is groping for her own authenticity. Her tragedy is that she will never live to achieve it. Her triumph is that one day she would have done so." (Newquist 225) Miranda gains self-knowledge in her prison, where she has a limited understanding of reality because of the impossibility of external action. However, as William Palmer puts it, "she is frustrated in her attempts to take the second step into full selfhood", which "can only be accomplished by means of moral, human action in the outer word" (84). And this will never happen as she dies in Clegg's cellar.

Miranda's plight and fatal end can be seen as a metaphor for the threat that the Many pose to the Few, thus illustrating Fowles's conviction that "[i]n societies dominated by the Many, the Few are in grave danger of being suffocated." (Newquist 225) To Fowles, it is a sort of moral imperative for the individual to take aim against the pressure exerted by the Many in an attempt to "create a society in which the Many will allow the Few to live authentically and to teach the Many themselves to begin to do so as well." (225) Miranda's failure in *The Collector* has to do with her inability to teach Clegg, despite all her efforts to do so, her inability to help him realise that he can change.

Comparing Fowles's conception of the Few and the Many with Camus's theory of the absurd man, Romero-Jódar explains that the contrast between the two main characters can be interpreted in the light of the confrontation between the desperate human quest for understanding (Miranda) and the irrational side of the individual (Clegg): "In fact, this lack of sense is what makes Clegg a dangerous psychopath, standing outside the borders of what is considered to be the realm of conscious behaviour, regulated by moral principles and social laws." (Romero-Jódar 48) Clegg is unable to distinguish between right and wrong, he is a quotidian villain often considered as a representative in fiction of the banality of evil (Cooper 24). To him, he is acting right and for Miranda's good: "My feelings were very happy because my intentions were of

the best. It was what she never understood." (*TC* 31) As has been pointed out, his narrative is written as a confession, but with the particularity that there is no shadow of repentance or remorse because he does not see any wrong in what he did.

This innocence Clegg is constantly claiming to seems to be reinforced by hazard. As Fowles puts it: "Hazard, the great factor we shall never be able to control, will always infest life with inequality." (*The Aristos* 11) Hazard seems to rule the events in the novel. If Clegg had not won the pools, he would not have had the money to buy the house where he imprisons Miranda, thus fulfilling what was only a fantasy. But more importantly, to Fowles hazard plays a key role when it comes to the factors that account for a person being one of the Many or one of the Few, and so, Clegg is the product of "a bad education, a mean environment, being orphaned: all factors over which he had no control." (10) Clegg considers himself to be a victim of circumstance, and he may be right, but he wrongly uses this to justify his behaviour, thus blinding himself to the possibility of change.

> 'Why do you take all the life out of life? Why do you kill all the beauty?' [Miranda asks] I never had your advantages. That's why. (*TC* 76)
>
> I understand, I said. I'm not educated. (*TC* 76)
>
> But it's in my character, it's how I was made. I can't help it. (*TC* 271)

And yet, this change Clegg does not even contemplate is possible, which in turn relates to Fowles's view that the Few exist in a state of responsibility towards the Many. The differences between the Many and the Few should not lead the latter to blame, despise or look down on the former. The Few should rather try to understand and help them to change, in spite of, or even because of those differences, which bring with them a duty. As Fowles points out:

> I meant simply that unless we face up to this unnecessarily brutal conflict (based largely on an unnecessary envy on the one hand and an unnecessary contempt on the other) between the Few and the Many; unless we admit that we are not, and never will be, born equal, though we are all born with equal human rights; unless

> the Many can be educated out of their false assumption of inferiority and the Few out of their equally false assumption that superiority is a state of existence instead of what it really is, *a state of responsibility* —then we shall never arrive at a more just and happier world. (*The Aristos* 10, original emphasis)

It is in line with the state of responsibility of the Few and in connection with the role of the artist in society that Fowles thoroughly criticises the realist novel of the 1950s. *The Collector* stands at the end of the British realist tradition and although there are links with these novels, Fowles definitely makes a break with them. He shares with the realist tradition the critique of the modernist artist as secluded in the Ivory Tower, but he also denounces The Movement's refusal to take writing seriously (Onega, "*The Aristos* and *Wormholes*" 22). He strongly believes in literature's power to affect the world and the reader, for the better or for the worse. That is why he is so concerned with the role of the writer, and that is the reason for his invective on the inarticulate "angry" anti-heroes of the previous tradition. They express their frustration and rejection of the social system and are depicted in a way that makes for the reader liking them. They are funny, like the protagonist of Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), and/or attractively rebellious, as James Dean was in film. Fowles gives a twist to this type of anti-hero and turns him into a psychopath, thus showing his dangerous side. To him, there is not much that is admirable about what these characters represent:

> I wanted to attack […] the contemporary idea that there is something noble about the inarticulate hero. About James Dean and all his literary children and grandchildren, like Salinger's Holden Caulfield, and Sillitoe's Arthur Seaton (in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*). […] I'm against the glamorization of the Many. (Newquist 218-19)

Significantly, novels illustrative of this realist tradition appear in *The Collector*. Thus, Miranda expresses her dislike after reading John Braine's *Room at the Top* (1957) and Alan Sillitoe's *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958). Regarding the latter, she declares herself unable to understand the main character's indifference and the author's

uncritical presentation. She is also surprised when Clegg fails to connect himself with Holden Caulfield in Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) but, as Onega points out, his reaction to Salinger's work, which Miranda asks him to read, only shows that "she had assumed, naively, that he had a greater self-awareness than is in fact the case" ("*The Aristos* and *Wormholes*" 23)

Self-awareness and critical self-examination are pre-requisites for change, as will be explained more in depth in what follows by focusing on other relevant intertexts. For now, I hope to have shown that Fowles was right when he complained —as mentioned at the beginning of this section— about *The Collector* being described as just a crime novel, since there is much more to it in terms of moral, social, and intellectual concerns.

III. EVOLUTION-TRANSFORMATION-STAGNATION: Jane Austen's heroines, William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and classical fairy tales

When the narrator is internal, as is the case with the two narrators in *The Collector*, the reader has a more unmediated access to the character's subjectivity and inner world. By means of narrative embedding,[5] the narrative voice is divided, the same story is presented from two different points of view, and each protagonist is defined by him/herself and by the other in a way that also allows the reader to compare them by comparing their accounts. I agree with Katherine Tarbox when she points out that Clegg gains no insight into his crime, his monologue being a pointless ramble, while Miranda's diary is a progress and a process, much more than a record of passing emotions, as it represents real self-examination (44). As the title of this section advances, I will focus here on how intertextuality helps to build up the contrast between Miranda's transformative evolution

[5] As mentioned above, Miranda's diary is embedded within Clegg's narrative, told in the retrospect, which suggests he has found the diary after her death and we can read it because he has read it. Alan Palmer describes this technique as "versions of characters that exist within the mind of other characters" (15).

and Clegg's stagnation or even involution, while simultaneously commenting on the development of their relationship.

At the beginning, the characters have no relationship at all apart from that between captor and captive. Miranda refuses to try and connect with or have any emotional response to her numb kidnapper. Later on, she makes an effort to understand him and their conversations are aimed at helping him to improve, in terms of culture, tastes, capacity for feeling and critical self-examination, etc. In the end, she makes a desperate attempt to seduce him, failing to see that this is not the way he wants to possess her. This only makes things worse, since Clegg's disrespect for and rejection of her from that moment on account for her death.

Their ability (Miranda) or inability (Clegg) to evolve is what differentiates the novel's two main characters. In her plight, Miranda identifies herself with Jane Austen's heroines, whose main trait is their capacity for maturing and learning from their mistakes, as Miranda tries to do. While reading *Emma* (1815), she remarks:

> I am Emma Woodhouse. I feel for her, of her and in her. I have a different sort of snobbism, but I understand her snobbism. Her priggishness. I admire it. I know she does wrong things, she tries to organize other people's lives, she can't see Mr Knightley is a man in a million. She's temporarily silly, yet all the time one knows she's basically intelligent, alive. Creative, determined to set the highest standards. A real human being. Her faults are my faults: her virtues I must *make* my virtues. (*TC* 157, original emphasis)

One recurrent motif in Austen's novels is the contrast between appearance and reality and, like Emma, Miranda will discover that authenticity is predicated on the rejection of a life based on appearances and false pretensions. Miranda is constantly analysing her beliefs and attitudes before being kidnapped, and her relationship with G.P. figures prominently in her reflections. She admires him, even if she has never allowed herself to think of him as anything more than a friend or a mentor. G.P. is related to Mr Knightley in that he is older and is the only one that criticises Miranda and openly tells

her about her mistakes. Just as happens to Emma with Mr Knightley, it takes time and suffering for Miranda to understand her true feelings for G.P.: "I am Emma with her silly little clever-clever theories of love and marriage, and love is something that comes in different clothes, with a different way and different face, and perhaps it takes a long time for you to accept it, to be able to call it love." (*TC* 238) Miranda's maturation process echoes Emma's, but is also explicitly related to *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), which Miranda mentions as well to comment that she is like Marianne but should be more like Eleanor (*TC* 201).

In line with this, Onega rightly asserts that, like Emma, Miranda has intrinsic values she has not been able to develop yet. Her imprisonment and her relationship with Clegg will teach her something, will change her pedantic assumptions and lead her to a deeper understanding of life (*Form and Meaning* 28). As Miranda puts it: "It's like the day you realize dolls are dolls. I pick up my old self and I see it's silly. Innocent and used-up and proud and silly." (*TC* 247) Similarly, Mahmoud Salami considers her development "from a naïve, dependent, and idealistic young woman into a more mature, realistic woman" (66), which is echoed by Miranda's view of herself as "much older and younger. It sounds impossible in words. But that's exactly it. I am older because I have learnt, I am younger because a lot of me consisted of things older people have taught me." (*TC* 248)

Unfortunately, Miranda's learning process is not conductive to happiness, as is the case for Austen's heroines. She cannot change the frozen collector mentality of her oppressor: just as he kills butterflies to possess them, he imprisons Miranda as one more specimen, the best, unable to understand love as anything but possession. Clegg fails to evolve or feel empathy, not even compassion when Miranda gets sick with pneumonia. His refusal to get medical help leads to her death.

Fowles builds Clegg's personality by using Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an intertext. The connection with the play is first made evident by the characters' names. Clegg lies when he tells Miranda that his name is Ferdinand. Although he is not aware that Ferdinand is the prince that wins the female protagonist's heart in Shakespeare's play —also called Miranda— one can assume this is what he would like to be, Miranda's love. By contrast, Miranda sees him, and refers to him, as Caliban. In the play Caliban is portrayed as a monster, a half-creature characterised by his beastliness and amorality. He does not improve and his mad obsession with Miranda leads to his attempted rape of her. Caliban remains a servant to Prospero despite the latter's attempts to change him, and he blames Prospero for becoming what he is (Punter 66). Similarly, Clegg also blames Miranda for her rejection of him. Like Prospero in the play, Miranda in *The Collector* fails in the attempt to change Caliban-Clegg, but we can also relate Prospero to G.P.: Prospero is his daughter Miranda's support and protector, just as Miranda finds support in his memories of G.P., who cannot protect her, though, due to her imprisonment and distance from him.

In spite of the fact that Miranda has obvious reasons for despising Clegg, she manages to make room for other feelings: "The pity Shakespeare feels for his Caliban, I feel (beneath the hate and disgust) for my Caliban." (*TC* 245) As explained in the previous section, the attitude of the Few towards the Many should not be defined by contempt but by a sense of responsibility. And so, Miranda tries hard to open Clegg's eyes to the possibility of change, she tries to leave behind her anger and hate in order to help him, but she fails.

Her unsuccessful attempt to transform the beast is intertextually connected with the tale "Beauty and the Beast". At one point in the story, Miranda tells Clegg what the reader cannot but recognise as a version of this tale in order to make him understand that

love is based on freedom and that beastliness is subject to change if one makes the right decisions. In the original version, the Beast frees Beauty because he loves her, while Clegg keeps Miranda prisoner because he has to possess what he loves. Miranda tries to make him see his error through her story-telling, but to no avail: "He didn't speak, he kept staring down. I said, now it's your turn to tell a fairy story. He just said, I love you. […] His fairy story." (*TC* 187, 188)

No wonder, then, that after Miranda's death, Clegg should start thinking about kidnapping another girl. In important respects, like seriality, Clegg recalls Bluebeard, who repeats the ritual of marrying, secluding, and then murdering his wives when they transgress a prohibition. Miranda's attempted seduction of Clegg in the novel can be seen as the equivalent to the door that should never have been opened, the broken prohibition which triggers Bluebeard's anger. Miranda's giving herself to Clegg is partly an act of forgiveness and generosity, partly an attempt to be herself and do something freely when her freedom is so limited: "I must fight with my weapons. Not his. Not selfishness and brutality and shame and resentment. Therefore with generosity (I give myself) and gentleness (I kiss the beast) and no-shame (I do what I do of my own free will) and forgiveness." (*TC* 238) But she makes a mistake, because he does not want her in a sexual manner. He wants her to remain unattainable, as the typically idealised courtly love lady. And so, once she becomes sexually close to him, Clegg thinks "she had killed all the romance, she had made herself like any other woman, I didn't respect her any more, there was nothing left to respect." (*TC* 103-104) He no longer sees her as a *princesse lointaine* (as G.P. calls her once) but as a fallen woman. And that will be her death sentence: no one rescues her, no one stops the villain in this darker version of

"Bluebeard".[6] The only consolation, if any, is to be found in Miranda's thoughts before her death: "I would not want this [the kidnapping] not to have happened. Because if I escape I shall be a completely different person. Because if I don't escape, if something dreadful happened, I shall still know that the person I was and would have stayed if this hadn't happened was not the person I now want to be." (*TC* 251)

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The previous analysis of the novel's main intertexts gives us an insight into the idea of the text as a dynamic process. As explained in the introductory section, the interpretation of a text involves not only the writer and his/her knowledge but also the reader and his/her knowledge, as both writers and readers are influenced by other texts in the way they conceive and understand the story, respectively.

The interpretation of *The Collector* very much depends on the construction of an intertextual net that includes many more nodes than those mentioned in the previous sections, but that cannot be discussed in the length of this essay. The narrative could also be related, for instance, to the courtly love tradition not only through Clegg's idealisation of the beloved but also through the novel's epigraph.[7] Romantic love is evoked as well through connections with *Romeo and Juliet*, as Clegg briefly considers the possibility of suicide as a way to make his love story similar to that between the protagonists of Shakespeare's tragedy. Clegg's love for Miranda is a platonic love, as Miranda suggests

[6] Bruce Woodcock (17) refers to Fowles himself explaining that the two events which influenced his conception of *The Collector* were his attendance to a performance of Béla Bartók's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, and coming across newspaper accounts about a kidnapping incident in which a young man held a girl captive for three months. Something that Fowles found compelling about this story was the bonds that the girl might have created with her captor, since it seems she could have escaped earlier than she did.

[7] "Que fors aus ne le sot riens nee" can be roughly translated as "And no one knew but them", referring to the hidden love story between the main characters in *La Chatelaine de Vergi*, a 956-line metrical romance dating from the 13th century and from which the epigraph is taken (Higdon 569). The sentence obviously takes a new meaning in the light of the story that follows.

when she mentions Dante and his poems on his love for Beatrice. Miranda sees Clegg as blindly and hopelessly in love with her, as Dante was with Beatrice, even if Dante at least used that as inspiration for artistic creation: his poetry. In Fowles's universe, creators oppose collectors: collecting is associated with deadliness, and Clegg is a collector, the opposite of Miranda, an artist, a creator. Miranda also makes reference to other texts throughout the narrative, such as *Sinbad the Sailor* when she compares Clegg with the Old Man of the Sea, the horrid old man that Sinbad had to carry on his back and who was to him as oppressive as Clegg is to her. Furthermore, a connection can also be established between Miranda's diary writing in order to cope with isolation and distress and Pamela's writing in Richardson's novel: Pamela also writes, first letters and then a diary, to better bear her seclusion and fear until she eventually manages to change the man who has a fixation on her. Pamela transforms Mr B, like Beauty transforms the Beast, which Miranda cannot do with Clegg.

These and other intertextual connections that could be mentioned make clearer the fact that the novel requires a competent reader, a reader able to build his/her interpretation out of the intersection of multiple texts. Fowles's intertextual games are both playful and serious, in that they not only tease the reader to connect but also contribute to the novel's formal architecture and its treatment of key themes. Moreover, intertextuality also plays a role in the novel's examination of moral and philosophical issues, which throws light on Fowles as a moralist whose purposes went beyond writing what could have been a crime novel of a more escapist nature.

By telling in *The Collector* the story of an art student imprisoned by a butterfly collector, Fowles presents the contrast between creators and collectors in a way that recreates in a different guise the conflict between the Few and the Many. Thus, Fowles tries to convey the danger that the Many pose to the Few, while criticising at the same

time the perspective of writers associated with the realist novel of the 1950s. Clegg in *The Collector* is not only an anti-hero but a psychopath. The links with Shakespeare's *The Tempest* further expand and complicate the reflection on "one of the sad truths of the twentieth century, the prevalence of an evil particularly dangerous precisely because of its banality" (Davidson 32). Through the references to Jane Austen's heroines, the author makes the reader aware that the world can be much more complex than in Austen's novels, where conflicts are solved and the protagonists invariably find love and happiness. Facing the world in all its crudity is a battle that must be fought, but that may exact a high price. Discussing the inspiration Fowles found in Bartók's opera *Duke Bluebeard's Castle,* George Steiner explains that Fowles wanted to show that "opening doors is the tragic merit of our identity" (106). Thus, Fowles gives a twist to the original tale and confronts the reader with the dilemma of considering whether Miranda's decision to walk the dark corridors of Clegg's mind and open the forbidden door amounts to doing the right thing or is the terrible mistake that seals her fate. Should we then open doors despite the danger that we know our action brings with it or should we remain static, but safe? Should we face risk? Should we commit those existential acts Fowles calls for, even if the struggle to be oneself is infinitely more demanding than submitting to the pressures to conform?

These and other questions teasingly face the reader of this novel, which Fowles constructs as a net of intertextual connections that traps us not only by forcing us to go beyond the limits of the text, but also beyond the comfort that is shattered when we are challenged to reflect on who we are and who we want to be, as Miranda is in the novel, and with her, perhaps, the reader as well.

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