

FUNCTIONS OF THE DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE IN JOHN FOWLES' *THE COLLECTOR*

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ABSTRACT:

IN HIS NOVEL ENTITLED THE COLLECTOR, JOHN FOWLES TELLS THE STORY OF FREDERICK CLEGG, AN ENTOMOLOGIST WITH SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL INADEQUACIES, AND MIRANDA GREY WHOM HE FALLS IN LOVE WITH AND SOON KIDNAPS.

FREDERICK CLEGG'S MONOLOGUE AND MIRANDA GREY'S DIARY RECONSTRUCT THE EVENTS OF THE HERO'S IMPRISONMENT OF MIRANDA GIVING TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE SAME STORY AND ENHANCING THE SENSE OF AUTHENTICITY AND VERISIMILITUDE OF THE NOVEL.

MIRANDA'S DIARY NOT ONLY GIVES THE VICTIM'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE SAME EVENTS PREVIOUSLY NARRATED BY CLEGG BUT ALSO PROVIDES GLIMPSES INTO HER PAST LIFE, THE LAST PART OF HER DIARY RECORDING HER AGONY WHICH IS REFLECTED IN THE DELIRIOUS AND DISJOINTED SENTENCES FROM THE END.

FINALLY, CLEGG TAKES OVER NARRATION ONCE AGAIN AND DESCRIBES THE MOMENTS BEFORE MIRANDA'S DEATH(DUE TO PNEUMONIA) AND THE NOVEL ENDS WITH CLEGG'S PREPARATIONS TO CAPTURE HIS NEXT RARITY, A GIRL WHO WORKS AT WOOLWORTH'S.

KEY-WORDS: ABDUCTION, DOUBLE PERSPECTIVE, MONOLOGUE, DIARY, NARRATION

1. Introduction: The Story

Frederick Clegg, an entomologist with social and psychological inadequacies is a lonely Civil Servant in the Town Hall Annex in London who has fallen in love with the young art student Miranda Grey whom he comes to hold captive in a secluded Sussex cottage. Owing to a troubled family past, Clegg is unable to make normal human contact. First he secretly admires Miranda from distance but soon he abducts her, imagining in his disturbed mind a scenario in which she lives with him and finally starts to love him in an idealized relationship.

A collector of rare butterfly specimens, Cleggs associates Miranda with an “elusive”, “sporadic” and “very refined” rarity. His father had died when he was two and his mother abandoned him and consequently he was raised by his Uncle Dick and Aunt Annie to become a socially deprived individual preoccupied with class, sexual taboos, trying to possess Miranda as one more collector's item.

The story has two versions, as it is told in turn by Clegg(“the Collector”) and by Miranda Grey who become surrogate authors for the text. The collector's point of view dominates the

narrative, since he renders the first, third and fourth part of the novel (while Miranda is the narrator of the second section).

As she grows more and more lonely and desperate, Miranda recollects her impossible relationship with the artist G.P., who was much older than her and whom she deeply admired as he was the one who taught her the facts of art.

Miranda's repeated attempts to escape fail and she finally falls ill with pneumonia and dies. Clegg takes over narration once again and describes the moments before Miranda's death. He decides to take Miranda to a doctor but he is stopped by a police officer and has but a narrow escape. He comes back to his house and watches Miranda die. After her death, he discovers her diary and comes to the conclusion that he had made the wrong choice. The novel ends with Clegg's preparations to capture his next rarity, a girl who works at Woolworth's.

2. Characters' Insurmountable Barriers and Double Perspective

In her article entitled *Human feelings mirrored in metaphors: The Collector by John Fowles*, Katarina Drzajic draws our attention on the fact that *The Collector* may be viewed from many interesting perspectives-as a psychological thriller, a Jungian study, a modern or postmodern piece of literature and in each perspective, as she puts it, Fowles is “ a well established master of language, using a variety of tools to convey different meanings and bringing his characters closer to his reader”[1]. In her view, the most prominent metaphors in *The Collector* are those comparing human beings to animals, the concepts of *above* and *below*, *life* and *death*, *light* and *dark*, *sex* connected with *dirt*, being emotionally in pain as opposed to being physically hurt.

The difference on which the two characters are constructed: class, gender, education, religion, language are also insurmountable barriers between them.

Miranda's hatred is directed not only against the “bestly Calibanity” of her warder but against all those falling into the category of the Many (“the Calibans of this world” “I hate scientists”, she says, “I hate people who collect things, and classify things and give them names and then forget all about them” (p.58) or as she says later on “Because they all hate us, they hate us for being different, for not being them, for their own not being like us[...]. I hate them. I hate the uneducated and the ignorant. I hate the pompous and the phoney. I hate the jealous and the resentful. I hate the crabbed and the mean and the petty. I hate all ordinary dull little people who aren't ashamed of being dull and little. I hate what G.P. calls the New People”. [2]

In Eddins Dwight's view, expressed in his study *John Fowles: Existence as Authorship from Contemporary Literature*, *The Collector*, as Fowles envisages him, “imposes a static system of images on the world and then proceeds to live inside that system, denying the existential implication of contingency. The system is the result of accretion-a cumulative calcifying of social and political attitudes, aesthetic constructs, emotional responses, and (most insidiously) self-image.”[3]

Clegg's daydreams indicate his extreme idealization of Miranda :”I used to have daydreams about her and all that...She drew pictures and I looked after my collection(in my dreams). It was always she loving me and my collection, drawing and colouring them, working together in a beautiful modern house in a big room with one of those huge glass windows”(p 8).

As Docherty puts it, Miranda appears first as a “pure object” in Clegg's imaginative deformation of reality but in Part Two, Miranda writes her text and begins to assert a “subjecthood”:she is “not merely a character of Clegg's creation, but a discrete individual

with a history independent of that which Clegg tries to impose, a history which stretches beyond her present situation and which is not strictly relevant to Clegg’s plot”[4]

Miranda and Clegg belong to different social classes and in the end it becomes obvious that there can be no real communication between them as a result of the social environment they belong to. They cannot be “free from spatial and temporal determinations”[5]:” She often went on about how she hated class distinction, but she never took me in. It’s the way people speak that gives them away, not what they say. You only had to see her dainty ways to see how she was brought up[...].Stop thinking about class, she’d say. Like a rich man telling a poor man to stop thinking about money.”[6].

However, according to Fowles ,Miranda Grey is not a positive character either because ,as the author explains in *The Aristos*, she ”the girl he[Clegg] imprisoned, had very little more control than Clegg over what she was: she had well-to-do parents, a good educational opportunity, inherited aptitude and intelligence. That does not mean that she was perfect. Far from it-she was arrogant in her ideas, a prig, a liberal-humanist snob. Yet if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately need”.[7]

Clegg’s complex of inferiority is due to various reasons, mainly his education and constant comparisons to Miranda and in Onega’s view her “failure to educate Frederick Clegg, to teach him the language of art and to help him abandon his collecting and voyeuristic activities can be interpreted as “Clegg’s inability to achieve “whole sight”, that is as the kidnapper’s failure to bring about his transformation from collector to creator, from disciple to magus or, in archetypal terms, from man to Anthropos” [8].

The difference between them is summarized in Miranda’s own words: “A martyr. Imprisoned, unable to grow. At the mercy of this resentment, this hateful millstone envy of the Calibans of this world”.(Fowles, p 206)

3.Conclusions

Miranda’s diary-beginning in October 14, approximately a week after she is kidnapped-has a double function- gives the victim’s perspective on the same events previously narrated by Clegg and provides glimpses into her past life. The last part of her diary records her agony which is reflected in the delirious and disjointed sentences from the end.

Frederick Clegg’s monologue and Miranda Grey’s diary reconstruct the events of the hero’s imprisonment of Miranda giving two perspectives on the same story and enhancing the sense of authenticity and verisimilitude of the novel.

In his incapacity to give up his prejudices and repressed sexuality, Clegg has no desire to change and his transformation is even worse: from butterfly collector to woman collector and murderer, in Onega’s view” an aloof and ogre-like monster, the frightful parodic development of the alienated and pathologically introverted Beckettian subject”(p. 40).

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