Human feelings mirrored in metaphors: 
The Collector by John Fowles

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Abstract
One of the strongest figures of speech, metaphor, is omnipresent in our everyday life, and thus inevitable in every work of literature. It takes a significant place in the work of John Fowles, one of the most prominent British authors of modernism/postmodernism. The Collector, claimed by many to be the first modern psychological thriller, is abundant in metaphors reflecting the emotions of the two protagonists, so the aim of this paper would be to further explore these metaphors and thus come to a better understanding of their thoughts and actions.

Keywords
metaphor, feelings, psychology, modernism

1. Introduction
According to Stockwell (2002, p. 1-2), “we can read literature any time we want to, but when we want to think about what we are doing when we read, when we want to reflect on it and understand it, then we are not simply reading; we are engaged in a science of reading.” The science of reading may thus represent a linguistic approach to literary studies in which, by closely inspecting the language the author uses, we may uncover the hidden meanings which lie underneath the text and even come to a better understanding of the characters' true emotions and desires.

Metaphor being one of the strongest figures of speech which we use in our everyday life, it takes a significant place in almost every piece of literature, conveying different messages and reinforcing the close bond between the author and the reader. Reflecting upon the novel The Collector by the renowned British author John Fowles, in this paper we shall analyze the use of metaphors in order to better understand the feelings of the main characters that are, in Fowles's typical manner, depicted so vividly and irresistibly that each one of us may certainly identify with at least one of them.

2. The Notion of Metaphor
As defined in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, “metaphor is a figure of speech that implies comparison between two unlike entities, as distinguished from
simile, an explicit comparison signalled by the words 'like' or 'as' (acc. to Kovecses, 2010). It is further explained that the components of a metaphor are tenor and vehicle, "with the tenor referring to the concept, object, or person meant, and the vehicle being the image that carries the weight of the comparison". These two entities are marked by Stockwell (2002, p. 106) as the source – the entity from which the meaning is derived, and target – the entity which is described by using the source.

"Metaphor is for most people a device of the poetic imagination and the rhetorical flourish – a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language. Moreover, metaphor is typically viewed as characteristic of language alone, a matter of words rather than thoughts and action. For this reason, most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature." (Lakoff & Turner, 1980, p. 4). Metaphor is, therefore, not only used in literature – it is a tool that we unconsciously use in everyday speech. We acquire it without thinking, even though in our minds might lie the thought that metaphor is just a matter of poetic language. As Lakoff (1989) says, "Far from being merely a matter of words, metaphor is a matter of thought – all kinds of thought: thought about emotion, about society, about human character, about language, and about nature of life and death. It is indispensable not only to our imagination but also to our reason."

Gibbs (2008) claims that "metaphor is not simply an ornamental aspect of language, but a fundamental scheme by which people conceptualize the world and their own activities" (p. 3). Conceptual, or cognitive metaphors are defined as "conventional metaphoric concepts" which are "normally used when we think, and the expressions that represent them in a conventional way are systematically used in the everyday language; they are concepts that we usually and systematically conceptualise in terms of others" (Romero & Soria, 2005, p. 5). "When, for example, in Sanskrit, the elephant is sometimes called the twice-drinker, otherwise the double-toothed one, otherwise still the-one-provided-with-a-hand, many different concepts are designated, even though the same object is meant. For language does not represent objects but rather concepts which, in the process of speech, have been formed by the mind independent of those objects," says Wierzbicka (1992, p. 5, acc. to Addison, 2008).

Metaphor is, without a doubt, a part of one's everyday life, but we must not forget that it is an inevitable part of literature, and is thus quite prominent in Fowles’s novel The Collector. In the same manner in which ordinary people perceive the world in metaphors, Clegg and Miranda, the novel's protagonist, express their intense emotions using this figure of speech.
3. The Collector

The Collector is the first published novel by John Fowles, a modernist/postmodernist author highly recognized for his immaculate language and deep understanding of human psyche. Fowles (1926-2005) was deeply interested in modern psychology, Jung's theories in particular, and thus created extremely convincing characters that may even help an ordinary reader understand their own passions and strive to resolve their own issues.

This novel is considered by many to be one of the first modern psychological thrillers, which is focused on two contrasting characters that, according to Fowles (The Aristos, 1964), repesent the privileged and the subordinate. Frederick Clegg, a lonely clerk obsessively in love with the young art student Miranda Grey, holds her captive in a remote cottage where they embark on a torturous psychological duel. Their struggle becomes more and more unbearable as the novel progresses and must end in a tragedy at some point. Meanwhile, they are involved in a series of dialogues, honest and manipulative, soft and aggressive, in which metaphor plays an important role in understanding their genuine feelings.

4. Clegg’s Perspective

Frederick Clegg, a young man with troubled family past, psychologically disturbed and unable to make a normal human contact, admires Miranda from distance, secretly plotting a scenario according to which she will live with him and gradually start to love him. His monologues, as well as the dialogues which he takes part in are characterized by extreme stiffness, unnatural politeness and desire to present himself as a genuine gentleman. He assumes the role of a rescuer who shall liberate the young Miss Grey from the claws of the mid-20th century society which is deeply vain and morally disturbed. Clegg, thus, uses a series of metaphors in his speech, out of which we shall mention the most prominent ones which help come to a better understanding of his character.

4.1 Filthiness vs. purity

The adjective filthy is mentioned three times in a metaphorical meaning in the novel (p. 5, p. 41, p. 68). As we find out in the beginning, Clegg despises filthy and worn women, only having his eyes for the clean, intact ones (p. 12). It is clear that the words filthy and worn are not used in their original meaning (unclean, or used up) but the reference is obvious to any reader – Frederick despises the women who are in some sense compromised, available to a lot of men, not untouched. In his mind he created an illusion of marrying a real lady who shall live up to his expectations by not having any sexual experience with other men. The male protagonist is unable to ascribe any negative feature to his loved one, that is to
say, until the moment she becomes *stripped* in front of him, showing the characteristics of any other *dirty* young woman.

“I forgot to say she had nasty yellow pimples on corner of her lips. And she didn’t smell fresh and clean like before,” (p. 268-269) things Clegg of Miranda when she falls severely ill, implying that she is not interesting enough for him any more. He even refuses to call a doctor for all the wrong reasons: “... I could see he was the officer type in the army, they’ve got no sympathy with you, they just give you orders, you’re not their class, and they treat everyone else as if they were *dirt*” (p. 274). By identifying his class as *dirt*, Frederick again expresses his insecurities regarding his origin. Even though sweaty, dirty and sick, Miranda is still above him, as is any doctor, any well-educated person.

On the other hand, his language is described as *filthy* by Miranda (p. 41), who uses every possible chance to underestimate him. He is also seen as a “diggusting filthy mean-minded bastard” who is “breaking every decent human law, every decent human relationship, every decent thing that’s ever happened between your sex and me (Miranda)” (p. 68).

Clegg’s views on *filthy* might be different from Miranda’s, though we cannot deny one thing – this adjective is, as in everyday speech, metaphorically used to describe something either compromised or used, or inappropriate, immoral, even evil.

### 4.2 Big vs. small, up vs. down

According to Ortony (1993, p. 5), “something new is created when a metaphor is understood” and “metaphor affords different ways of viewing the world”. We shall further discover that Clegg also resents “small people” (p. 13), the representative of whom is his Aunt Annie who raised him, as well as her cripple daughter, who wanted to take advantage of him after winning a lot of money in the football pools.

On the other hand, his love is “worthy of her (Miranda)”, her eyes are “curious”, but “not snoopy, of course” while she is questioning him on the reasons he is holding her prisoner. Furthermore, he sees Miranda as “all small and pretty” (p. 16) – in this case, we might connect the adjective *small* with *feminine, soft*, even *submissive* in a way (which is what Clegg expects his ideal woman to be).

“There was always class between us,” claims Clegg (p. 42), as if something were really physically standing between him and Miss Gray, in a way accepting his inferior position. Even though a prisoner, Miranda maintains her pride on a high level, trying to deceive him in all possible ways and make him liberate her.

“He knew I would always be above him,” thinks Miss Grey (p. 131), again noticing the distinction between *above* and *below* as metaphoric representatives of more and less worth. “If I use vionelce I descend to his level ... how could I ever
look in any way but down on him?” (p. 238 and p. 243) – the motif of a class between them reappears – she is up, and he is down, degraded and underestimated. After realizing that he cannot sleep with her, Miranda concludes that “there is no man in him” (p. 252) – he is just a monster, a Caliban, unable to please anyone.

“You’re no better than a common street-woman, I said. I used to respect you because I thought you were above what you done. Not like the rest. But you’re just the same. You do any disgusting thing to get what you want,” Clegg tells Miranda after she tries to sleep with him hoping to be set free (p. 118). Stockwell (2002, p. 110) claims that “good is up”, so by implying that Miranda was not above what she has done, she is actually below, Frederick equals Miranda with a prostitute (metaphorically, street-woman), leaving her to die, starved and neglected.

4.3 Dominance vs. submission

Clegg compares Miranda’s questioning to a physical fight, explaining that she always “gets him on the defensive”, which is not what he has hoped for – on the contrary, he has always been the dominant one in his fantasies. Kovecses (2010, p. 11) explains the concept of dead metaphors by claiming that they “may have been alive and vigorous at some point but have become so conventional and commonplace with constant use that by now they have lost their vigor and have ceased to be metaphors at all”. This being said, we may even conclude that Clegg’s complaining of Miranda constantly hurting him represent a dead metaphor, since, in our everyday life, we use the word hurt as inflicting both physical and emotional pain.

4.4 Beautiful vs. ugly

Just like Miranda’s appearance is beautiful according to her torturer, all her gestures are beautiful too - “Even when she did things considered ugly, like yawning or stretching, she made it seem pretty. The truth was she couldn't do ugly things. She was too beautiful” (p. 69) We may even say that, when Miranda compares herself to a “humble slave” (p. 77) it excites him a bit since he has already got used to the subordinate position which makes the reader wonder who actually plays the role of torturer, and who is really the tortured one.

“You’re not ugly, but your face has all sorts of ugly habits. Your underlip is worst. It betrays you,” says she (p. 62), giving even his physical appearance evil traits. She despises him being a butterfly collector and identifies herself with the poor insects held in drawers: “You’re like a miser. You hoard up all the beauty in these drawers” (p. 58). Just like the butterflies are confined in the prison of
Clegg's home, Miranda is jailed between the four walls of her dungeon – Frederick's *specialty* is “killing the living beauty” (p. 58).

“I just think of things as *beautiful* or not. Can't you understand? I don't think of good or bad. Just of *beautiful* or *ugly*. I think a lot of nice things are *ugly* and a lot of nasty things are *beautiful*,” claims Miranda, confusing Clegg (p. 92). But, for her confusing and playing with his emotions she shall soon be punished – he will do the lowest thing possible, stripping her down and taking her pictures all tied up (p. 95). The polite gentleman shall become the wicked rapist (even though he did not actually physically rape her) and never view her the same way again. Miranda will become the *used* woman, a kind of whom he has always despised, which shall eventually lead to her demise.

It is interesting to mention that the adjective *beautiful* is mentioned 47 times in the novel, 10 times in metaphorical sense (p. 46, 50, 51, 52, 85, 90, 113, 129, 137, 150). The word *ugly* is mentioned 20 times (7 times metaphorically; p. 34, 38 x2, 52 x 2, 134, 150), so it proves out that these two metaphors are among the most used ones.

### 4.5 Death – the Departure

“We've been naked in front of each other,” said Miranda, “we *can't* be farther apart” (p. 112). The situation which would probably bring most couples closer to each other has set these two completely *apart* in a mental way. “She killed all the romance, she had made herself like any other woman, I didn’t respect her any more,” thinks Clegg (p. 114). We may as well notice that, according to Lakoff and Turner (1989), death is often used as a metaphor for some kind of departure. “Death is inevitable and final” (Lakoff & Turner, 1989), so, by pronouncing death to the romance, Clegg declares *death sentence* to Miranda herself, depriving her from the role of a perfect innocent *bride*.

“You are not keeping *me* prisoner any more. You are keeping *death* prisoner.” (p. 97) Miranda feels that the end is approaching, and thus she will try to sleep with Clegg, seeing this as her only way out. It shall, on the contrary, make the situation even more unbearable. “It was terrible, it made me feel sick and trembling, I wished I was on the other side of the world. It was worse than with the prostitute; I didn’t respect her, but with Miranda I knew I couldn’t stand the shame” (p. 109). As we may see, Clegg identifies *the other side of the world* with the escape from this spiteful situation, of having physical contact with Miranda. In dealing with uncomfortable situations in our everyday life we will often say that we would like to *escape* to another place, feeling free of the burden. Clegg also places sex into the category of *shameful* activities, and it shows out that he cannot even *perform* sexually with the girl he claims to love unconditionally.
5. Miranda's Perspective

Although a victim in this context, according to Fowles, Miranda Grey is not an entirely positive character either. In *The Aristos* (1964) the author explains: "I tried to establish the virtual innocence of the many. Miranda, 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, like so many university students. Yet if she had not died she might have become something better, the kind of being humanity so desperately need."

As we shall see, she has no problem confronting her abductor, thus proving her dominance in this relationship until otherwise is proved the moment she compromises herself in front of Clegg.

5.1 Animal Metaphors

Previously ungrateful, Miranda realizes she loves life from the moment she is captured, contemplating on how she used to underestimate it before. She uses several animal metaphors to describe her vicious kidnapper, all of which heavily underestimate him.

About Clegg she says: "No nastiness, no sex thing. But his eyes are mad. Grey with a grey light lost in them ... Fish-eyes. They watch. No expression" (p. 126 and p. 131). It is clear that the word *nastiness* is metaphorically linked with sex, though it is useful to notice that this might represent Fowles's ironic note, since he is well-established as an advocate of sexual freedoms. What is more important, though, is that Clegg's eyes are brought into connection with the eyes of a fish, with *grey light lost in them*, which tells us about his madness with no expression whatsoever in his look.

She further notices that he does not look dangerous when you first see them, that he is "unwolf like" (p. 128). Lakoff and Turner (1989) have notices the frequently used metaphors in which we compare people with animals, providing the example of Achilles being a *lion* - which meand fearless, courageous, dominant. In the same manner we may conclude that wolf here is connected with danger, aggression, and by saying that Clegg is *unwolf like*, Miranda actually thinks that he looks harmless, even clumsy in a way.

On the other hand, in her moment of submissiveness, she is compared with a *lamb* by Clegg (p. 31), marking someone *frightened, inferior, harmless*, which is, needless to say, the role which suits the male protagonist the best.

5.2 Death and hell

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The word *hell* is used 5 times in the novel (p. 77 x 2, 124, 134 x 2), while *death* is, amazingly enough, mentioned 15, 5 of which are used metaphorically (p. 55, 74, 77, 81, 130). “This is *death*. This is *hell*. There wouldn’t be other people in *hell*. Or just one, like him. The *devil* wouldn’t be devilish and rather attractive, but like him” (p. 133). Miranda is desperate in her own *hell*, between the four walls. We may probably conclude that we have used the word *hell* to describe an extremely difficult situation from which there seems to be no way out. By comparing a person with the *devil* himself, we clearly suggest that they are harsh, ruthless, with some evil lying in them. She later starts calling Frederick *Caliban*, like the subhuman from Shakespeare’s play *Tempest*, also desperately obsessed with a woman named Miranda, while Clegg tells her that his first name is Ferdinand, also a character from *The Tempest*, the ultimate winner of Miranda’s heart.

“He’s a collector. That’s the great *dead* thing in him” (p. 172). Miranda feels exactly like the poor butterflies lying dead in Clegg’s drawers, implying that their destiny is to die too, ending up like one of them, hidden somewhere in his remote property. Furthermore, she is “alive in the way *death* is alive” (p. 74), implying that she feels *dead inside*, that is, completely disconsolate, her existence being utterly pointless. Her defying Clegg she describes as “a sort of chess-game with *death*” (p. 81), meaning that everything she does to confront him bears a terrible risk.

On the other hand, there is “nothing of *death*” (p. 130) in G. P., Miranda’s love interest from the past on whom we shall mention a few words.

### 5.3 The Motif of Love

Lonely and desperate, Miranda starts reminiscing upon her relationship with the artist G.P., quite older than her, whom she innocently admired. She craved for him while he was teaching her the facts of art, his lonely nature always prevailing, so in the end it was impossible for them to maintain a stable relationship. “I’ve grown up among people who’ve always tried to hide passion. He was *raw*. *Naked*. Trembling with rage,” says she about G. P. (p. 178) Metaphorically speaking, when we say, for instance, that someone was standing *naked* in front of us, or describe their nature as *raw*, we imply his honesty, complete sincerity, without a hint of calculation. Thus, Miranda wants to say that, unlike her sometimes, G.P. was completely sincere in everything he was doing, deeply genuine, even though rough at times. He reminded her of the narrow-mindedness deeply rooted inside her, and, by facing the *Caliban* every single day, she realizes more and more that she could learn so much, so many new facts of life, if only she were free.

“I love honesty and freedom and giving. I love making, I love doing, I love being to the full, I love everything which is not sitting and watching and copying
and dead at heart,” thinks the poor girl (p. 218). Dead at heart for her menas being just one of the little women (p. 219), those who get married just to satisfy the norms, while on the other hand she realizes that she could have had he chance to do something more in her past.

“I love you … He said it as he might have said, I have cancer” (p. 200). Clegg’s love for her is equal to cancer – torturous and unbearable. Kovecses (2010, p. 50) points out to the ever-repeating metaphor of life represented as a journey, and death as the journey’s end. This being said, we might as well conclude that Caliban’s love, like cancer, will eventually lead to death of the young woman.

“I could never cure him. Because I’m his disease,” (p. 257) – Miranda is now dirty in Clegg’s eyes, which shall eventually lead to her quietus. While Clegg is a disturbed creature, in her last days Miranda still remembers G. P. “He creates love and life and excitement around him; he lives, the people he loves remember him” (p. 256). G. P. takes up his life journey to the fullest, creating love, even just by sex, which is suddenly not so sinful in Miranda’s eyes after reaching at least a bit of authenticity while being captured by Frederick.

She soon starts to fall ill, Clegg neglecting her, refusing to help her due to her immorality. “God is impotent. He can’t love us. He hates because he can’t love us” (p. 264).

6. The Journey’s End

After Miranda’s departure, we shall soon discover another proof of Clegg’s true nature – though we might have pitied him at some points when Miranda looked down on him, we will realize that he actually is a cold-booded torturer, seriously mentally ill.

“I knew she was dying then… I just sat there, listenig to her breathing and muttering (she never seemed to sleep properly) and thinking about the way things turned out. Thinking about my rotten life and her life, and everythig else” (p. 279). His life is rotten – that is, degraded, insufficiently worth, the process of rotting may also be brought in connection with dying, which might imply that Clegg wishes to die with Miranda, too.

“I couldn’t risk getting help, I was beaten, anyone would have see it.” By claiming he was beaten, the male protagonist is searching for excuses for not providing a suitable care for Miranda. Again, he is only thinking of himself, unable to sympathize – the unbearable struggle with might have beaten him, but he shall stay true to his nature – not knowing what to do, he will simply prepare himself a cup of tea (p. 281).

“If I really had got a nasty mind I would have not gone through all the trouble I did” (p. 284), Clegg continues justifying his actions. At one poit he is even contemplating suicide, but soon gives up on that plan, finiding a whole new
reason to live. Upon discovering Miranda’s diary he is clean of guilty conscience – he realizes she never loved him, constantly thinking of another man (p. 286), so he will soon find a new victim, this time learning from his mistake.

“She isn’t as pretty as Miranda, of course, in fact she’s only an ordinary common shop-girl, but that was my mistake before, aiming too high, I ought to have seen that I could never get what I wanted from someone like Miranda, with her la-di-da ideas and clever tricks ... Of course I would make it clear from start who’s boss and what I expect” (p. 287-288).

7. Conclusion

_The Collector_, one of the most prominent novels of the 20th century, may be viewed from many interesting perspectives – as a psychological thriller, a Jungian study, a modern or postmodern piece of literature. John Fowles is well-established as a master of language, using a variety of tools to convey different meanings and bring his characters closer to his reader.

Metaphor being one of the common tools of everyday speech, it is inevitable in any novel, and thus represent a significant part of this literary work. The metaphors most prominent in _The Collector_, and thus analyzed in this paper, 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.

Needless to say, just like in everyday speech, metaphors in Fowles’s work are neverending, so there is so much room to explore and discuss them in the future. Whatever we do, we cannot escape them, aware of them or not, just like Lakoff and Turner (1989) stress:

"It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children, we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor. It is conventional: metaphor is an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. And it is irreplaceable: metaphor allows us to understand our selves and our world in ways no other modes of thought can."

References


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