

Defying the “Nemo”: Breaking Conventional Boundaries in John Fowles’ *The Collector*

تحدي "النيمو": كسر الحدود التقليدية في رواية "الجامع" لجون فاوولز

Meriem Chebel

Maitre Assistante A-Badji Mokhtar University-Annaba-Algeria,

meriemchebel@yahoo.fr

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Abstract

This paper deals with the journey taken by the characters and the author in John Fowles’ *The Collector* to overcome the “nemo,” an important philosophical concept in Fowles’ *The Aristos*. The “conventional boundaries” referred to in the title are what Sartre refers to as “bad faith” which means the choice of following the traditional conception of meaning created by the herd and averting the opportunity of embracing one’s freedom in spite of the meaningless of existence to create an authentic self.

The nemo is the anguish that comes as a result of that challenge of choice imposed on the individual, and the latter can only overcome it by embracing its frustrating effect rather than finding ways to rid himself of that anguish. However, even when the characters face a lack of success in overcoming the nemo, it only leads to an appealing balance of the text’s structure with its content. Without this balance, Fowles would have failed his own conception of “good art.”

Keywords: Nemo, Fowles, *The Collector*, existentialism, absurd, Many, Few

ملخص

تتناول هذه الورقة البحثية رحلة شخصيات و كذا مؤلف رواية "الجامع" لصاحبها جون فاوولز، وهي رحلة التغلب على "النيمو"، المفهوم الذي يحمل دلالة فلسفية بالغة الأهمية في كتاب "الأرسطو" لنفس المؤلف. الحدود التقليدية كما هو مشار إليها في العنوان هي ما فضّل سارتر تسميتها "بالإيمان السيء"، و المقصود به اتباع الفهم السائد و التقليدي للمعنى الذي شكله العامة من الناس و المنافي لفرصة اعتناق الفرد حريته بغية تشكيل ذات جوهرية (أصيلة) بغض النظر عن الوجود الفاق للمعنى.

النيمو هو تلك المعاناة الذاتية التي تنتج عن صراع الخيارات التي تُفرض على الواحد، الأخير الذي لا يقدر على تجاوزها إلا بالتصالح مع شعور الإحباط الذي تسببه عوض البحث عن سبل الخلاص من تلك المعاناة. في المقابل، حتى لو كان نجاح شخصيات الرواية في التغلب على النيمو نجاحاً بسيطاً، إلا أن ذلك يؤدي إلى توازن بين هيكلة النص و محتواه. بدون هذا التوازن، كان يمكن لفاوولز أن يفشل في تصويره للفن الجيد.

كلمات مفتاحية: نيمو، فاوولز، "الجامع"، وجودية، عبثية، كثير، قليل.

1. INTRODUCTION

John Fowles' non-fictional work, *The Aristos*, was published after his first novel, *The Collector*, seizing the opportunity of its success to break with the categorization of being a “novelist.” Fowles' (1964) main principle in writing and in life is to free oneself from categorization: “To call a man a plumber is to describe one aspect of him, but it is also to obscure a number of others” (p. 7). What is more vital to him is “to preserve the freedom of the individual” (p. 7). The title of his first novel, however, implies certain significance to categorization, a significance that is rather important to the aim of this paper, for deducing the success or the failure of defying the nemo relies completely on understanding it. Whether this significance is positive or negative, as will be explained shortly, it is prevailing, since the author chooses to use the word “collector” as the novel's title.

2. Fowles' Conception of the “Nemo”

The Aristos forms an ideological background to most of Fowles' novels. His admiration for French existentialism shows in his work, as its basic concepts stem from it. One important concept is the “nemo,” which is the product of “a supreme form of anguish” or what is nihilistically referred to as a status of “nobodiness” (p. 47). In other words, the nemo is the realization that existence has no intrinsic meaning other than what we, as free individuals, give it. A human being has always found difficulties in embracing his absolute freedom in the face of the world's inevitable absurdity. Fowles' intention is not to just reformulate existential ideas using other concepts; his contribution lies in understanding, unlike most existentialists, that the nemo is not simply anguish that is free of the human subconscious. According to him, while desire and the need for security are innate ingredients that accompanied humans since the beginning of existence, the nemo “is a human psychic force” that started existing since the existence of civilization (p. 48). This force is usually defied in two ways. The first is to use the social norm accepted by the herd, that is, to identify oneself as a “somebody” in one's society, to achieve a success, and to have a group to blame for one's failure. The second is to conflict, stand out, create an individual persona, and to preserve one's individualism.

Fowles argues that in modern art the latter approach is popular. The artist values form over content and tries to create “new” appearances coupled “with banality of theme” (p. 50). This obsession of searching for an individual persona is primarily motivated by a fear of losing one's

individuality and an ambition to be remembered as a way to escape the constraints of his finite self. Fowles suggests that one should rather embrace it than react to it and be defined by it. Authenticity lies in surviving time and place through the ability to communicate to fellow humans through time. Great art, to Fowles, has always managed to do so. It is only great art that shows evidence of defeating the nemo, and it has not done that by being “new.” Great art is timeless. It is this feature that breaks boundaries of conventions, for great art can’t simply be categorized. Its value survives time and places and all technical artistic movements created by academics to “collect” and organize art. The concept “collect” here is used to refer to the main character in the novel, Frederick Clegg, whose hobby is collecting butterflies as a way to survive in the world. Although his approach to life is inauthentic (according to Fowles’ philosophy), he later has the potential, through changing the object of his hobby to humans, to free himself from this obsession and realizing the impossibility of collecting and categorizing humans.

By analyzing *The Collector*, we won’t be just analyzing the mission of the characters in defying the nemo and breaking conventional boundaries of the herd and themselves (by obsessing over the individual persona too much) but also the mission of the author himself and his contemporary conventions of mimesis.

3. Absurdist and Neurotic Individualism to Defy the “Nemo”

The novel has two main sections: the first starts with the narrative of Clegg, whose obsession with Miranda Grey, a beautiful and brilliant art student, leads him to kidnapping her and imprisoning her in a cellar in a country house that he buys for this aim solely. As mentioned before, Clegg’s obsessive behavior lies in his narrow-minded approach to life that has defined his method towards what he creates, or rather, in his case, owns. He sees Miranda as one of his butterflies and desperately attempts to categorize her, which gives a reader who is familiar with Fowles’ philosophy the first hint of whom to side with in the story since Clegg is the sort of artist that does not like his characters (to him, Miranda is a character in his dream world) free. Clegg’s way of describing Miranda and how he is often surprised at her acting in an unexpected way, or talking in an unpleasant or unwelcoming way, shows how detached from reality he is. He has built, before bringing Miranda to his gothic country house, an imaginary world where everything goes the way he wants while his captive keeps

acting in a non-conformist way that his schizophrenic mind cannot make out. In fact, Clegg's schizophrenia is what is limiting his scopes of understanding the world around him. M. Salami (1992) argues that Clegg is a man “unable to separate his dream world from reality” in the sense that he “fantasizes and imagines different worlds with Miranda, the ‘object’ of his dreams” (p. 56), even if these worlds are in fact contradictory to each other:

That was the day I first gave myself the dream that came true. It began where she was being attacked by a man and I ran up and rescued her. Then somehow I was the man that attacked her, only I didn't hurt her; I captured her and drove her off in the van to a remote house and there I kept her captive in a nice way. Gradually she came to know me and like me and the dream grew into the one about our living in a nice modern house, married, with kids and everything. (Fowles, 1963, p. 14)

He is both the captor and the “rescuer”, imagining himself a fantastic hero in her world. Even the house he buys displays a dualistic world, where the upper world is bright and open while the underground (where Miranda is locked) is “damp, the walls like wet wood in winter” and “a bit frightening” (p. 17).

The conception of morality is another evidence of Clegg's schizophrenia, for he does not think of his actions as wrong or right but simply as “within [his] rights” (p. 120). The reader finds it difficult to judge him since even Miranda does not think of morality as good or bad. She tries to teach her philosophy to Clegg and ignores the fact that he needs to be taught about right and wrong rather than “beautiful” and “ugly”: “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” (p. 88). Miranda's constant attempts to teach Clegg about having a better taste (by criticizing the decoration and breaking things that are not aesthetically fulfilling to her) strengthens Clegg's hatred for her class and his sense of inferiority, which make things worse by widening the gap between them.

What Miranda fails to observe is that Clegg has already firm aesthetic principles that value appearance over matter. What he needs to learn is to see the importance of the independence of his works of art from his obsessive individualism, including his latest project “Miranda,” which makes Clegg an inauthentic artist according to Fowles. However, it is through Clegg that we can see a model of Fowles' “not-to-be” artist. Miranda, who speaks for Fowles, fails to portray for the reader the final

version of the “to-be-artist” since she dies before she can be able to reach her authentic self.

Clegg’s embellished romanticism is an escape from the real world that seems to reject him as an individual. His obsessive artistic style is an attempt to defy the nemo and his finite self. “Fear” is not the right word here; it is rather an unconscious desire to stand out from the crowd. His attempt unsurprisingly fails, as his project fails with the death of Miranda and the discovery of her diary. Another possible reading to Clegg’s obsession with the fantastic is his own sexual impotency. This can be seen in the most important scene in the novel, that of Miranda’s attempt to seduce Clegg into sexual intercourse as a last resource for her freedom. This scene represents the climax of the plot in both narratives; while Clegg suffers from a shock of unreality (which is rather a reality to Miranda and the reader), Miranda is left to understand that her last attempt at escaping failed. However, the reader is able to predict the consequences of Miranda’s actions. Clegg’s objective is to have power over Miranda. Sexuality is not altogether excluded from this, for his claim of superiority is implied in his pornographic pictures of her. His love for Miranda is a well-constituted set of ideologies structured from pornographic magazines and standards of beauty originated in moving pictures. It is also a personal ideology of “having” what he loves. Miranda’s mistake is acting as a free individual while she is, according to Clegg, already “his” and, thus, owned and classified. He explains, “What she never understood was that with me it was having. Having her was enough. Nothing needed doing. I just wanted to have her, and safe at last” (p. 101).

Salami (1992) believes that Clegg’s sexual perverse demonstrates another dimension of impotence, which is social (p. 55). Through his narrative, we understand that Clegg has a hard time communicating with people. This might go back to his personal history of being an orphan. Even his uncle, the one person he likes, dies when he is young; however, his uncle is pleasant enough because he shares his admiration for his art of collecting butterflies. We might as well say that Clegg’s “absurd” universe and inclinations are the result of his solipsistic isolation from his society, a type of solipsism that comes from his own absurd self. Fowles, through Miranda and Clegg, wants to show the difference between the existential and the absurd. Since Fowles promotes his ideas through Miranda, which we will come to later, the comparison Miranda draws in her narrative between Arthur Seaton, in Alan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, and Clegg is a criticism to the absurd anti-hero that is embodied by Clegg.

Fowles, here, attacks “the idea that there is something noble about the inarticulate hero” (as cited in Vipond (Ed.), 1999, p. 1).

Clegg embodies the absurd man because he is like Albert Camus’ conception of Sisyphus in his “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942). Camus’ notion of the purpose of Man is more pessimistic than that of nihilists. While Nietzsche, for instance, argues for a hopeful ethics of an overman, Camus believes that Man has no hope in creating any meaning even when he is absolutely free. This is actually what creates the absurd, which comes as a result of a clash of rationalizing the irrational inarticulate real world we live in. While both the existentialist and the absurd man realize this incoherence, the existentialist tries to find solutions and attribute an authentic meaning to it; however, the absurd anti-hero believes there is nothing of the sort, like in the case of Sisyphus from Greek mythology. Sisyphus had been condemned by the gods and had been given, as a punishment, the task of doing the same activity, pushing a rock up the mountain and seeing it roll downward. He would repeat this task as long he lived. According to Camus, all Men’s tasks are as meaningless as Sisyphus’. Since we base our tasks on values that are mainly constituted to rationalize the inarticulate world, these tasks are meaningless and, thus, absurd. Camus (1991) further analyzes the conception of the absurd man of the world as follows:

What, in fact, is the absurd man? He who, without negating it, does nothing for the eternal. Not that nostalgia is foreign to him. But he prefers his courage and his reasoning. The first teaches him to live without appeal and to get along with what he has; the second informs him of his limits. Assured of his temporally limited freedom, of his revolt devoid of future and of his mortal consciousness, he lives out his adventure within the span of his lifetime. (p. 66)

Clegg also claims that all what happens to him is a result of accidents or what Fowles calls “hazard,” from the winning of the football pools to the kidnapping of Miranda. He acts without much thought to the future. He rids his life of any inherent meaning. He lives aimlessly, and even when Miranda openly calls him Tantalus (who is again another similar figure in Greek mythology to Sisyphus), she can hardly deduce the absurd in him. The death of Miranda at the end of the novel is analogical to the death of Meursault’s mother in Camus’ *The Stranger*. It does not trigger any sense of remorse or grief as there is no inherent meaningful attachment; Clegg instantly gets ready to kidnap another girl whose name starts with “M”

which, as he claims, is another accident; this shows that his actions are having the same pattern of repetition, like those of Sisyphus. While some critics claim that Clegg misses on purpose the chance to be among the “few,” his absurd character makes it quite impossible. Salami claims that Clegg “may have the potential to become a good man, but instead he chooses evil” (p. 48); however, Clegg is absurd par excellence since he never thinks, although he often explains himself to the reader that he does not think of what he is doing as wrong.

4. The Struggle for Existential Meaning

While Clegg is fulfilled in living a purposeless life that holds no meaning, Miranda struggles to find meaning that is authentic, which rather makes of her an existential hero. She belongs, or rather tries to belong, to the category of people she and Fowles, as she speaks for him, conceptualize as the “Few.” The Few stands as an opposite to the “Many.” Both concepts, as Fowles’ argues, are originated in Heraclitus’ philosophy, for the latter “saw mankind divided into a moral and intellectual elite (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” (1964, p. 9). Miranda categorizes Clegg as a member of the “Many,” or as she puts it the “New People,” which can also be referred to as Nietzsche’s “herd.” She also struggles to be among the “Few,” like her friend G. P., who “represents a sort of ideal now. His sense of what counts, his independence, his refusal to do what the others do. His standing apart” (1963, p. 234).

Throughout her narrative, Miranda tries to free herself from her social class, her mother, and her art school’s society. She finds her imprisonment, a waking call “to The right way. Not what they meant by ‘the Right Way’ at Ladymont. But the way you feel is right. My own right way” (p. 245). Her discourse is rather snobbish since she finds Clegg’s “right way” wrong. However, we can hardly judge Miranda the way she is judging Clegg since her existential journey ends before she reaches her authentic self.

Miranda’s partial success, which has not been focused on by critics, lies in a realization of her love to G. P. and the seduction scene. In the first, she argues against her former well-established principles of not marrying someone, who is too old the way her mother did; she finds out that she wants to marry G. P. because she does not feel like he is a “father-husband” figure anymore (p. 235). G. P. helps Miranda see the world with an eye of

an emancipated human. In her confinement in the cellar, she re-evaluates G. P.'s existential ideology and finds that it is the only decent way to live fully; this comes after her struggle of seeing the age difference between her and G. P. as a “terribly cruel” strike of fate”(p. 206). Later, as she revises her relationships with younger men and herself manages to gain absolute emancipation from the “nice little middle-class doctor’s daughter” (p. 266), which is ironic since her body is still imprisoned: she decides that she wants to marry G. P.

In the second scene, Miranda tries another plot to free herself from Clegg’s prison. Although she fails in seducing Clegg (her failure is a great misunderstanding of Clegg’s persona), she celebrates a personal triumph against her former conformist self: “That I’ve done for the first time in my life something original. Something hardly anyone else can have done. I steeled myself when we were naked. I learnt what “to steel oneself” meant” (p. 262). She then announces that that is “the last of the Ladymont me. It’s dead” (p. 262). Through Miranda’s narrative especially, we can deduce that the conflict does not lie between herself and Clegg only, but also within themselves to defy the nemo and find their authentic selves. In here, lies the main difference between Fowles’ conception of the Many and the Few and that of Heraclitus. While Heraclitus sees them as two opposite social entities, Fowles considers that “the dividing line between the Few and the Many must run through each individual, not between individuals” (1964, p. 10). The “aristos,” Fowles most superior individual, struggles to disown all types of social memberships that rid him of his individuality and freedom. This does not concern the Many only.

Belonging to the elite can also compel a conformist character to an individual, which has been proved in the course of history, as Fowles believes, that even the Few can turn into a “a mere oligarchy” (p. 213). We can see this in Miranda’s blind adherence to G. P.’s philosophy. She feeds on his ideology and judges people accordingly making her a sort of a “collector” although she despises artists, who do so. She categorizes Clegg and all her friends and acquaintances as part of the Many, neglecting that fact that everyone is entitled to their freedom of choice. A real aristos does not see other people’s free choices as inferior:

I want to use my feelings about life. I don't want to use my skill vainly, for its own sake. But I want to make beauty. And marriage and being a mother terrifies me for that reason. Getting sucked down into the house and the house things and the baby-world and the child-world and the cooking-world and the shopping-world. I have a

feeling a lazy-cow me would welcome it, would forget what I once wanted to do, and I would just become a Great Female Cabbage. (1963, p.150)

Miranda, here, shows her admiration for the independent woman, who wants to rather “make beauty” than just become what she calls a “Great Female Cabbage,” which is a very prejudiced classification of other women, who make free choices to be more than “low-cow” females. However, Miranda’s snobbery starts to lessen once this prevalence of the Many over the Few in her takes hold, for, at the end of her narrative, she realizes that it is time to step out of this G. P.’s personified herd, for he “condemns too much” (p. 183). She comes to the conclusion that as long as a person has strong “principles” (p. 183) about whom he is, then he is among the Few.

Miranda ends up “making” no work of art that is original or becoming among the Few, even with her two minor triumphant moments, and she fails because of her constant anxiety and obsession of her own individualism, a struggle that is shared, ironically, by Clegg in his own way. However, as many critics assert, if Miranda has survived from Clegg’s capture, she would have become an aristos.

Fowles’ own journey of defying the nemo as an artist resembles that of Miranda. Although there are instances of success, his work suffers, especially in Miranda’s narrative, a lack of freedom. Miranda’s narrative is imprisoned by Fowles’ ideology through G.P. although the aim of “the dual narrative and the tactical insertion of one narrative text within the other [...] is related to the existential principle that the free will of others must be respected” (Salami, p. 49). However, since Miranda gains relative freedom from G.P.’s capture, she also gains freedom from the author through Clegg’s narrative, whose ideology and style are certainly not the author’s.

One important element in the novel’s structure is how it serves the thematic purposes of the novel, which creates an aesthetic appeal that balances the didacticism implied through Miranda’s narrative. M. Salami observes that Clegg’s dominance in narrative reinforces the theme of imprisonment (p. 47), for he writes three chapters that incubate Miranda’s diary. Nevertheless, his unreliability weakens his imposition of power. Although Salami finds both narrators unreliable, Miranda’s existential growth renders her more honest. Salami compares both accounts of the seduction scene, where Miranda says she undressed Clegg and he ran away, and Clegg claims that she was already naked. Clegg confesses to the reader, in a defensive way mostly, that he lied to Miranda about her impotence; yet, the reader cannot trust him since he does not give reasons for why he prefers

the fantastic over the real in sexuality. His discourse is filled with defensive expressions, like “what I’m trying to say is” which he says several times, and whatever he says after it is the opposite. “What I am trying to say is that it all came unexpected” appears exactly before and after Miranda’s narrative as if to defend himself against Miranda’s words. He explains at the beginning of the novel, “what I’m trying to say is that having her as my guest happened suddenly, it wasn’t something I planned the moment the money came,” (p. 11) which means the exact opposite since he explains himself without having to, like a child who lacks the right social skills to lie properly saying the real intention behind the proclaimed denial; this, again, explains his asocial pathological character. While he blames it on chance, his actions are rather too patterned to be just a set of accidents. His choice of the next girl “Mabel” is claimed to be an accident, even if her name starts with the same letter as Miranda, while the reader is already familiar with Clegg’s repeatedly patterned lies that he uses to defend his artistically pathological obsession with “collecting.”

Miranda’s initial lack of reliability is due to her being “an unquestioning product of her class and background” (J. Acheson, 1998, p. 11). Her way of judging Clegg changes as she grows out of her liberal ideas and sees him from a rather sympathetic way because his “inability to better himself, despite the fact that he has certain redeeming features, is pathetic” while hers is rather tragic (p. 11). Miranda’s subjectivity does not come as another point against her reliability; her change of the course of the reported conversations between herself and Clegg is admittedly modified (only the imagined scenes she creates where he is “Caliban” instead of “Ferdinand”) because, as she confesses, she is “going to write what [she] want[s] to say as well as what [she] did” (Fowles, 1963, p. 141). Her writing style is affected by both: her emotional turmoil and her artistic aspirations; however, she is honest with herself and her aim is not to win the reader’s side (for she imagines that her audience is only her loved ones), but “to authenticate [and] sustain her subjectivity and freedom” (Salami, 1992, p. 50).

Miranda is truly more reliable than Clegg in that she does not need to be defensive since she is the victim; yet, what her situation implies is exactly that. If we analyze her promises to help him with her attempts at doing so, we discover a different side to her character that puts Clegg in a slightly better position than that of the villain. Miranda constantly acts as his superior and does not cease to show him that by imposing her ideology and romanticizing the mission of saving him. She never acts without being aware of her own superiority, which blinds her sense of objectivity towards

analyzing Clegg’s character. She even tells him the story of “Beauty and the Beast” in the intention of empowering his sense of heroism and forgets that part, where the story is “dehumanizing” to his “bestly” figure. She is even surprised when he is irritated. Instead of gradually bringing Clegg into the real world, she shocks him with a role of “Caliban” or the “Beast,” assuring his eternal habitation in the fantasy world. A better solution would be to bring Clegg’s “Ferdinand” gradually to the real “Fredrick” that he is.

5. Fowles’ Journey in Overcoming the “Nemo”

The style of the novel relies on the style of the characters and their freedom from the author. While Clegg’s style is grammatically defected and is constantly self-explanatory, representing the lower middle class in him, Miranda’s is fragmented, honest, and frustrated. She even thinks of writing as inferior to painting:

When you use words. The gaps. The way Caliban sits, a certain bowed-and-upright posture — why? Embarrassment? To spring at me if I run for it? I can draw it. I can draw his face and his expressions, but words are all so used, they’ve been used about so many other things and people. I write "he smiled." What does that mean? No more than a kindergarten poster painting of a turnip with a moon-mouth smile. Yet if I draw the smile ... (Fowles, 1963, p. 158)

In this quote, Miranda refers to writing as less expressive than painting; yet, her fragmented hesitant description portray Clegg in an accurate way to the reader, for we know, from his narrative, the type of awkwardness Miranda is trying to draw here as “embarrassment” or waiting “to spring at her if she runs for it.” Adding the fantastic “Caliban” finishes the last touch on the verbal painting she is drawing. The constant struggle, Miranda faces while writing, adds an aesthetic realm to her tedious didacticism. So, her disdain for writing in a perfectly expressive manner brings a balance of content and structure that Fowles sees necessary in creating a good work of art. Nevertheless, Miranda is not without choices to use her favorite medium of expressing herself, for Caliban does bring her material to paint, but, and may be this implies an opinion of the author himself about the superiority of writing. She later deduces that writing “keeps [her] sane down here, gives [her] somebody to talk to. But it's vain. You write what you want to hear” (p. 269). She creates several interlocutors (her sister and G. P.); she, through writing, “humanizes” her dehumanized situation. She also confesses that

writing creates a superior self than that of the author himself, for one writes what one “wants to hear” rather than one is. May be Fowles is trying to say that an artist, in creating art, is more of an aristos than when he is his ordinary self. We can actually see the difference between what Miranda philosophizes in her diary about how she wants to help Clegg and how she actually treats him.

There are two important literary allusions in the novel that are implied by Fowles, Miranda, and Clegg. The first is Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. The first character to refer to it is Clegg by trying to delude Miranda that she is captured by a “hero” rather than a villain. Ironically, Miranda rewrites his own reading into her stubborn superior conception of the play by referring to him as “Caliban,” which leads to her own end since there is no Prospero, the hero-like figure. This is another evidence of Miranda’s lack of insight that is supported by the allusion. The indication is rather implied by the author showing us that if Miranda has understood Clegg’s obsession with the fantastic role that he creates, she could have become his Prospero. In both scenarios, there is a re-writing to Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, which rather changes the romance in it—in the case of the first scenario, into a thriller—which smoothly authenticates the text by reconstructing its original form to suit the novel’s themes, again demonstrating a consistent balance of structure and content.

The second allusion is Jane Austen’s *Emma*, which Miranda reads during her capture. Although Miranda can see that there is a resemblance between her and Emma in that they both share that “priggishness,” she “admire[s] it” (p. 166). What she admires is that while Emma knows that “she does wrong things, she tries to organize other people’s lives, [and]she can’t see Mr. Knightley is a man in a million,” she is also “basically intelligent, alive. Creative, determined to set the highest standards. A real human being.” (p. 166) Miranda shows, here, her own hamartia that leads to her own tragic end. While we admire her for her honesty, she fails to read Austen’s morality in Emma’s moral growth. Her focus ends mainly in Emma’s faults; however, she is also open about her own subjective reading when she announces that “her faults are my faults: her virtues I must make my virtues,” (p. 166) which she barely does when her next reference to Emma is matching Clegg with “some little Harriet Smith” (p. 229) misunderstanding him and his obsession with collecting another “M” and focusing, instead, on her own fantastically heroic mission of saving him.

6. CONCLUSION

The mission of the main characters in overcoming the nemo is complementary to that of the author. While Clegg does not bother with the mission and Miranda struggles, yet, fails because of her death, Fowles' creation of art revels in such an authorial accident that had an intention of advocating Miranda's superiority over that of Clegg. While the narrative shows a promotion of the existential through Miranda, the absurd appears to be more pro-artistic than the existential. Existentialism has a rather didactic discourse that rids art of its beauty. Thus, Clegg is rather a pleasant accident (aesthetically speaking) in the novel, for without his narrative, the novel would appear to be nothing but didactic. Both narratives give a certain balance to Fowles' novel, and it is through Clegg that the author breaks through his categorization of his own artistic creation, which saves him from being a “collector” himself.

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