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JOHN 'THE CAMERAMAN' FOWLES – THE GAME OF VISUAL EFFECTS IN FOWLES' NOVELS

In 1856, when John Ruskin published the third volume of *Modern Painters*, he declared that painting is properly to be opposed to speaking or writing, but not to poetry. Both painting and speaking are methods of expression. Poetry is the employment of either for the noblest purposes (Landow 2005). Much has changed since the 19th century. Moreover, there are new problems arising, concerning not the differences, but similarities between literature, painting and the visual arts in general. The IX Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, which took place in 1979 in Innsbruck, caused comparative literature studies to focus on the relationship of literature and the other arts, comparisons of literature and sister arts. Thus a contemporary comparatist might investigate the relationship between literature and the other arts: music, painting and film. In Innsbruck, Oscar Walzel's hypothesis concerning the mutual illumination of the arts was continued by Ulrich Weisstein who suggested a catalogue of connections between literature and arts (Janaszek-Ivanickova 1989:145–146). These 'catalogue' forms are: the studies of literature forms which use artistic techniques, the studies of literature forms describing or recreating works of art, and the studies of literature forms participating in the subject a work of art expresses, etc. Fowles' work can be ascribed to such studies.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the similarities between visual art and literature, and inadvertently to provoke discussion on this issue, on the basis of Fowles' use of the visual in his novels. Fowles (1999:8) himself declared:

The novel is now generally about things and events the other forms of art describe rather better. [...] To write a novel [nowadays] is to be [...] aware of trespassing, especially on the domain of the cinema. [...] All of us under forty write cinematically; our imaginations, constantly fed on films, 'shoot' scenes, and we write descriptions of what has been shot.

Fowles, being a man of his age, has realised it had become impossible to be a writer and not to be a cameraman at the same time. To 'shoot' scenes is to produce images, and – to a certain degree – to be a painter.

Seweryna Wyślouch in her preface to *Ut pictura poesis* acknowledges the urgent need to build a new direction in literature studies, devoted to the investigation of the mutual coexistence of literature and visual arts: *The reception of the Horacian adage has exceeded far beyond the author's intentions. [...] The pressure of the multimedia and new forms of communication using pictures, speech and sound, have prompted reflection over the contemporary art and culture*¹ (2006:6–8). I believe Fowles' literature and his use of visual art can provide material for such insight. Visual perception and observation are the key issues of nearly all of his works. However, much remains to be investigated, in particular, how the pictorial media function in the context of narration and the realisation of a book. It might be significant to be reminded of the fact that Fowles so frequently resorts to visual metaphors. The critic is entitled to assume that there is an unacknowledged desire to venture into the powerful coexistence of image and word, which seems to fill the civilisation of the late 20th century. His use of the 'camera eye' was nothing new, however. The technique has primarily been ascribed to Dos Passos, who uses characteristic interludes within the *USA* trilogy to describe his own experiences. However, while I feel Dos Passos' technique turns the novels into a 'documentary impressionism' (combining documentary and impressionism), Fowles' use of the visual brings him more in line with both a sensitive cameraman and a painter with impressionist inclinations.

Because that which Fowles has left to humanity is largely based on visual art, it is impossible to treat the subject comprehensively in one article only. Therefore I intend to signalise the following elements: game (including its godgame aspect), cinematic effects and painterly techniques, set in the context of the metaization of art.

'Metaization' would probably be one of John Fowles' most often used words, had he indeed been aware of the fact that he incorporates it in his works almost to saturation point. It can be explained as the movement from a first cognitive (or communicative) level to a higher one, on which all the media used become objects of reflection and communication. The process, previously restricted mostly to fine arts, in the twentieth century became popularly known in the context of postmodernism. In Werner Wolf's (2009:4) opinion, contemporary media users are inevitably presented with metaphenomena. In literature,

¹ [Recepcja Horacjańskiej formuły wykroczyła daleko poza intencje jej autora. [...] ciśnienie multimediów i nowe formy przekazywania odbiorcom komunikatów, wykorzystujących obraz, mowę i dźwięk, skłaniały do refleksji nad współczesną kulturą i sztuką]. The extract presented is self-translated, as are those which follow – Izabela Belz-Kaczmarek.

however, the explanation and characteristics of metaization still poses numerous problems, with overleaping terms and various degrees of affinity with 'metareference'. The semiotic approach is one way to explain the notion, in which metareference is a case of self-reference where signs point to themselves or to identical or similar elements within one and the same semiotic system. This can be opposed to 'hetero-reference', in which signs refer to the 'reality outside' the semiotic system. One may understand that a 'self-reference' work is a book that refers to nothing else but different texts. However, Wolf calls this case an *intra-compositional self-reference*, where its opposition is *extra-compositional self-reference* (*ibid.*). This second notion is particularly present in Fowles' works, with his constant use of visual arts in a literary form. Self-reference implies constant reflection on other elements of the system or a system as a whole. It does not place a particular work of art in the centre, but rather in between various forms – combining music, drawing and painting with literature or film. This form of intertextuality is based on something more than self-reflexiveness – the author 'quotes' other works of visual art, prolonging the novel with their use (discussed in an ensuing segment of the article). They constitute both an integral and separate part of the novel. Integral, because they represent elements of reference in the book; separate, because they have been created by different authors in different times, probably not even in reference to the same subject. Together they constitute a complex system of unique qualities. This requires a competent reader, not only knowledgeable, but willing to cooperate in the 'game'. The word has been use intentionally, for I assume game or play are areas where 'metaization' can be incorporated. This can also be shaped under the link between literature and visual arts, e.g. film, painting or drawing and almost always requires a certain degree of synaesthesia. In my opinion, metaization it nothing but engaging cognitive frames to create complex, upper-level semiotic systems – in other words, to enrich literary forms with extra-linguistic elements, such as visuality, sound or the notion of a game. Both in games and metafiction the participant, the audience or the reader agrees to be placed in a position which requires a dose of duality.

As expressed in the words of Łotman, metaization is based on:

[...] a special, 'playful' behaviour, different from both practical and the one, which requires the use of cognitive models. It assumes simultaneously (not alternatively) practical and agreed upon behaviour. A participant of any game or play should remember that he is in an agreed upon (not authentic) situation (a child remembers that he sees a tiger toy and is not afraid of it) and not remember about it (while playing, a child perceives a tiger toy as a real tiger). (Żyłko 2002:53–54)²

² [Gra zakłada szczególne – „zabawowe” zachowanie, różniące się zarówno od praktycznego, jak i tego, które określa posługiwanie się modelami typu poznawczego. Zakłada postępowanie

Therefore in metafiction the affectation is a game itself and functions dually – on one hand for purely pragmatic purposes, on the other – to be in the state of this latent awareness (that all the pragmatism is not to be taken completely literally). This is certainly a quality which differentiates fiction from fact and allows the reader to read a novel and enjoy it while – at the same time – realizing that the events presented are not to be taken seriously. In the case of metaference, the awareness is no longer latent. The reader actively remembers about the novel being a fiction and the element of a game, participating in it with rational distance, only pretending to be in the state of latent awareness. This fact should be remembered especially when reading Fowles' *Mantissa*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Magus*.

The first novel constitutes an open projection of the author's dilemma. There is a constant game which incorporates the visual. The reader is forced to participate in the author's literary fantasy. Fowles (as Miles Green) controls and, simultaneously, fails to control his characters. His muse, Erato, seems to be an independent, strong woman, whom Green must obey. However, certain elements indicate that even her independence is only allowed thanks to the writer: *You think I got nothin' better to do than piss around rubbin' out porn, you're out of your tiny mind* (1997b:52), and *That's another of your faults. You never leave anything at all to the imagination* (*ibid.*:58). The characters are fully aware (in as much as fictional characters may be aware) that they exist only on the pages of the novel. What is more, they treat their existence not as identical to reality, but surely equal, as Erato declares: *What you forget is that I am not something in a book. I am supremely real* (*ibid.*:59).

The Magus, on the other hand, is almost entirely based on game and the aforementioned double behaviour. From the moment Nicholas Urfe learns about Conchis, the game starts, to become more elaborate and dangerous with time. The *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* defines the term *godgame* as *a tale in which an actual game (which may incorporate broader implications) is being played without the participants' informed consent, and which (in some sense) is being scored by its maker*. A key figure in the godgame is the *owner of the game* (a Magus, a *magister ludi*, a god) (Clute 1997:414–415).

The game we find in *The Magus* remains safe and relatively harmless as long as both sides act accordingly to the agreed upon behaviour (*while playing, a child perceives a tiger toy as a real tiger*). Nicholas soon realizes that he is participating in a charade but willingly agrees to obey the rules of the game, which becomes dangerous the moment the limit between the game-like

jednocześnie (a nie na przemian) praktyczne i umowne. Uczestnik gry czy zabawy powinien jednocześnie pamiętać o tym, że znajduje się w umownej (a nie autentycznej) sytuacji (dziecko pamięta, że ma przed sobą tygrysa-zabawkę i nie boi się go) i nie pamiętać o tym (bawiąc się, dziecko uważa tygrysa-zabawkę za żywego tygrysa)].

behaviour and reality is trespassed – like in the case of the Nazi occupation. The game ceases to retain its essential qualities because the duality of behaviour is disturbed. Lotman states that an essential part of the game (both drama and childplay) is the 'duality of behaviour' (Żyłko 2002:54), where all the participants are conscious of their active participation in a game while trying to evoke real feelings.

This however bears an important question – what do this godgame and visuality have in common? I shall try to prove that a literary 'god' and film director have indeed much in common in terms of constructing novels. Let us address this question on the basis of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where Fowles openly allows us to be a part of his narrative dilemma. *How could I use you? Now what can I do with you? [...] what the devil am I going to do with you?*, he asks himself rhetorically, sitting in a train compartment, wondering what Charles' next step should be. One more element brings him closer to being a god – he tosses a florin to help him decide which of the two planned endings should appear as the second. While the gods may or may not *play dice with the Universe*, Fowles uses a token of his godlike power – a simple coin. 'So be it', says he afterwards. The readers will be presented with two endings. A choice – yes, but always, as in Fowles' case, limited. We are not allowed to produce our own version of the final event. Is this part of his teasing godgame? Fowles is perfectly aware that any novel has its own 'life' after it is released by its author. Perhaps that is why he implemented so many similar effects that remind the reader who the 'director' is, who the boss is, or who the god is.

The word *director* is used deliberately not only to underline Fowles' position but also to stress the reader's role – every time we read a novel, there is a projection. One may as well say that a novel is only complete once it is being projected in the reader's mind. Is he the director? Can he be one? In case of other novels, perhaps the answer would be positive. Unfortunately, that is not the case in Fowles' art. He allows a certain dose of limited freedom of projection. How is that pictured? First and foremost, there is the double ending of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* which would allow one to think so. Again – the ending is not in fact completely open. There are two possible outcomes, both created by Fowles. There is no possibility for the reader to construct a third variant. The reader has as much choice as the author allows, not more, not less.

It is interesting that Fowles must have always wanted to be a director, as he admitted in one of his essays: *[...] for us a lot of novel writing is, or seems like, the tedious translating of an unmade and never-to-be-made film into words* (1999:8). There are certain director-like elements in his novels. Fowles likes to remind us that he is, in fact, in charge, although he perfectly acknowledges the reader's contribution to the realization of a novel. The writer likes to advocate these elements as the 'godgame' and they are indeed prevalent in his works. The author plays a god directly – by being a creator himself. The god-like creation of

a novel is similar to a director's work. The difference is that directors are often gods to the film crew. In the case of novels – the readers are the crew, obliged to follow the author's directions.

There is also a significant element of the godgame in *The Collector*, distancing the reader from what is happening in the story. Let us begin from the first: the protagonist arranges and plans the kidnapping. He is the master of the ceremony and – as it turns out – the master of Miranda's life and death as well. He directs or plans to direct. His level of scrupulousness is vividly demonstrated in his notes and his passion for collecting butterflies. Of course, every kind of creator, director and collector is obsessed by something, and artistic passion. This obsession allows him to pay such a significant attention to details. Therefore Frederick plans everything as if he was to create the most important film of his life; worth an Oscar. This is how an obsessed collector reacts when he sees a specimen of rare creatures. Fowles explains that, perhaps, every director is a maniac obsessed with his vision, a recurring image which haunts him. Whether he will pose a danger depends only on the nature of the vision itself.

As stated before, one of the prevalent elements of Fowles' being a director-like figure is his constant use of game. There is more to add to it – there is always someone who conducts it, a master of ceremonies. Fowles himself is the first one. Apart from reminding the reader about his constant presence (the fact that the novel is in fact 'his' has marked his presence significantly enough), Fowles likes to distance himself and the reader from what happens in the novel. Just like when watching a touching movie somebody would tell us: *Relax, it is only a film*. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the reader observes a Victorian setting from a modern viewpoint. The reader can 'feel' the over-100-year distance, occasionally stumbling across various commentaries of the author, which – as one would rightly suspect – differ significantly from the Victorian viewpoint. The train scene and numerous comments which appear throughout the book should probably be the first association, yet there is a more straightforward affirmation: *This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I created never existed outside my own mind. [...] Perhaps it is only a game. [...] Or perhaps I am trying to pass off a concealed book of essays on you* (1996c:97).

However, Fowles' indirect approach is seen in the fact that he, as a writer, reminds the reader of his constant 'presence' in the novel. It was him who has created it, who has had the final word in developing the plot, on the characters' decisions. An example which best illustrates this point is, probably, the previously mentioned scene from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*:

So I continue to stare at Charles and see no reason this time for fixing the fight upon which he is about to engage. That leaves me with two alternatives. I let the fight proceed and take no more than a recording part in it; or take both sides in it. [...] I take my purse from my pocket [...] I extract a florin, [...] I flick it [...] and catch in my left hand. So be it. (1996c:390)

It is indisputably one of the most interesting passages in the book, where Fowles constructs the novel in front of the reader. He wonders what to write, which ending to choose. Staring at Charles, he creates a double, cinematic effect: the reader sees both Fowles sitting on the train and in front of his unfinished novel. Cut. We see Fowle's face watching his companion. He is dressed accordingly, another gentleman from the epoch. Cut. Fowles is sitting at his desk, dressed in contemporary style, perhaps touching his chin and wondering what his next sentence should be. Although no such scene is present literally in the book, the reader – aware of the writer being from a different epoch – may start producing a similar scene. It is a very cinematic extract, perfectly designed to be made use of in a movie. Fowles, intentionally or not, engages the readers' imagination fully, far beyond what is written.

The train scene is also an example of the game Fowles plays with both readers and Charles, the protagonist. He tosses a coin, his sudden appearance (it is – interestingly – the only such moment in the entire novel) on the train, his wondering what to do with the characters resembles a board game children play on a rainy afternoon. In this sense, Charles is only a pawn, and the reader – one of the players or simply an observer who is only allowed to watch the game and partly to be in it, but not to participate fully.

Mantissa may serve as another example of the joyful invitation Fowles sends to the readers who enter his creative world. The protagonist, Miles Green at one point starts speaking literally incorporating into his 'spoken' text comas, full stops or dashes:

[...] we agree that the formal basis for our discussion must be your recognition of the indisputable fact that if you had only manifested yourself earlier in the text (...) we should therefore not be respectively staning [...] here in this absurd hospital room that I haven't even the patience to describe properly [...]. (1997b:64)

Being constantly reminded that the events are only figments of Fowles' imagination, the readers are distanced from the novel. Any kind of game is a perfect means to achieve a gripping but – at the same time – distancing effect. In *Daniel Martin* however, the writer uses the protagonist to retell the story. In *A Maggot*, there is a series of depositions made by witnesses, with letters serving as intersections. The distance becomes even greater when the reader compares the characters, their tones and the content of these testimonies. Designed to differ in terms of who the speaker is, they cut the reader off from the actual story. In each of his later novels – *Daniel Martin*, *Mantissa*, and *A Maggot* – Fowles tries to experiment with certain close-ups, more self-reflective and designed to present the viewpoint of each character. Peter Conradi notices that *in Daniel Martin, there are gestures towards cinematic effects, such as flash-forward and flashback, cut and close-up, to accord with Martin's career as filmscript writer* (Conradi 1982:95). The novel is, in fact, probably the most cinematic of all

Fowles' literary experiences. The protagonist, Daniel, is a successful (although dissatisfied) Hollywood screenwriter who gives the readers some glimpses of his life in a series of scenes. Their presentation is interesting in how some of them are presented – Dan does not retell the events conventionally, but rather describes them as if they were a part of a screenplay. He tries to look at his life from a double distance, trying to deepen his self-knowledge and create a reliable self-image. Daniel refers to the events as if he was describing someone else's life, trying to put it into a self-reflective novel. Fowles uses this double-writing 'catch' to create what he himself called *whole sight* in the enigmatic first sentence of the novel. The premise is tightly connected with the narrative structure. *Whole sight* can be interpreted both philosophically and literally, but definitely Fowles uses sensory images to develop this notion. There are recurring words, images and themes. The time is cut into pieces and presented in chunks, which – interestingly – does not disrupt the fluidity of the story. *Daniel Martin* is a revision of a lifetime of experience, trying to achieve this "whole sight", the inner and deep knowledge of oneself. In Fowles' (and consequently Martin's) opinion, we can only achieve this by 'standing aside', by looking at life as a film or at least a series of stills. Individual perspective will never allow the achievement of this.

In striking contrast to the narrative of *Daniel Martin*, *Mantissa* proves to be an intellectual and sexual fight of Miles Green and his muse, Erato. Each of them tries to manipulate the other, sinking deeper into this imagined relationship. Here, the visual functions differently – it is rather a kind of surveillance of the self (we must remember, that the story takes place almost entirely in the protagonist's head). Everything can be distorted and what is 'seen' is in fact never sure. The reader takes part in a peculiar show taking place in Miles' (and, to a certain extent, Fowles') consciousness.

Fowles' next novel, *A Maggot*, constitutes a more cinematic experience. The novel explores the mysterious case, in which an eighteenth-century gentleman disappears, leaving his worried father with nothing but conjectures. The father hires an investigating lawyer, Henry Ayscough, who tries to solve the mystery by interrogating the witnesses. Their depositions offer him (and the reader) a varied, vivid picture of society, with all its hierarchal structure, where people constantly watch and observe each other trying to place themselves among others. The reader too has to watch and is presented with the truth that he probably also does so in his real life.

Every witness brings something new, contributing to the final interpretation of the possible explanation of the mystery. The cloud that at first covers the case gradually disappears. If we were to put it into a film without making many alterations, there would be several sub-films, each beginning with Ayscough's encounter with a witness under interrogation. Every film would be different in pace, narration, tone and details.

Perhaps the most intriguing of these ‘films’ would be Rebecca Lee's deposition. Rebecca, *the prototypical modern individual, experiences the difficulty of breaking free from the restraints of society and convention (A Maggot. Wikipedia)*. She is more intuitive, more emotional, more ‘artistic’. Her critique of Ayscough's search for answers suggests that this obsession with facts and what can be only seen and measured does in fact blind the eye. There is always more than can be observed on the surface.

Together with Rebecca's testimony, Fowles offers a complex vision of society and reality. There is no universal point of view, because the other person may always see and notice more. He creates a sequence of images, all different in character, reflecting Norman Denzin's summary of the gaze:

A gaze is not simply voyeuristic. It is regulated, has a trajectory, and evokes emotions and conduct which are differently reciprocated, and erotic. A gaze may be active, or passive, direct, or indirect and indifferent. [...] Finally, every gaze is regulated, structured by underlying systems of power and gender. (Brooke 2008:45)

Fowles acknowledges the fact that readers see the text in different ways. That is probably why he resigns from an omnipresent and omniscient narrator, turning himself to a more complex account (although never entirely objective). He believed that perspective and point of view are neither rigid nor fixed, but fluid and subject to change. As he explained:

That is perhaps why my taste in fiction is towards a fair degree of realism in style and my taste in nonfiction (say in what scientists and academics write) is towards those who can exhibit qualities like tolerance of hypothesis, dislike of the rigid interpretation, a general fluidity of attitude, and a basic sympathy towards a subject [...] a touch of ordinary humanity, in a phrase. (Fowles 1989)

Another example of creativity Fowles allows is the vagueness of certain aspects and elements (which in turn introduces the next use of the visual: painting). For example, one does not learn Sarah's exact appearance. She seems more unearthly than any other character from *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The reader is allowed to project her looks only on the basis of certain 'hints' Fowles leaves.

It was certainly not a beautiful face, by any period's standard or taste. But it was an unforgettable face, and a tragic face. Its sorrow welled out of it as purely, naturally and unstoppably as water out of a woodland spring. (1996c:16)

Also, the quotation above proves that Fowles must have had the eye of a cameraman or a painter. The way he describes Sarah is very painterly – her hair is of reddish hue (*the red sheen in her dark hair*, 1996c:162), creates a lovely contrast between it and the cobalt dress she wears. I also believe that in this description he comes closer to impressionism, a 19th-century art movement

(although still invariably popular), which concentrated on the impression an object evokes, not on the exact details. Therefore Fowles does not describe Sarah in the proper meaning of the word. He rather tries to present the impression she evokes.

The impressionist technique does not only apply to descriptions, but rather to the whole construction of a novel. *Mantissa* serves as an illustration. The book is loosely written in the form of a conversation between the writer and his muse, has variable pace and is about nothing more than the novel itself (to be more specific: about its creation). The writer once said commenting on *Mantissa*: *I rather like novels that aren't connected and carefully linked – where you get the equivalent of a blur in impressionism. You're not quite sure what the author means you to think* (Vipond 1999:125).

Fowles also uses impressionism in one of his short stories, *The Cloud*. To be more specific – he uses the technique of pointilism, in painting associated mainly with Georges Seurat. Fowles applies the use of points to think in pictures. The very beginning constitutes one 'point' – a picture which can easily be compared to Claude Monet's *Terrace at Sainte Adresse*, although the writer compares the description to Courbet's art, who – interestingly – had painted nothing of such kind. The description of people walking through a meadow full of flowers constitutes another 'point', which this time can be associated with Monet's famous *Poppies*, even though Fowles replaces the reddish hue of flowers with bright yellow. While in *Ebony Tower* he talks about pictures, he actually presents them in *The Cloud*. I can see separate descriptions as pictures which become 'points'. They in turn serve to create a broader image, the full projection of the story. One may also associate this technique with collage where miniature pictures serve as 'colours' to 'paint' a major picture.

In the respect of the opposition of reality vs. fiction, all extracts where Fowles 'reveals' himself as a writer can be compared to a famous Velasquez's painting, *Las Meninas*, in which we see the painter himself. Like Fowles' books (e.g. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*), the work is self-reflective because it presents the painter at work with the object of his gaze (the factual subject of his painting) being the invisible authority: the king and the queen of Spain, seen in the mirror behind the artist. However, one is forced to admit that the painting not only presents reality but also simultaneously constructs fiction. These two are combined in a paradoxical relationship: between the illusion of reality, the reality of the personas in the mirror and the shadowy man standing in the background, observing the scene. They all point to reality; however, they remain only representations of certain people of things previously put on canvas and are, by nature, unreal, serving as a representation of what is only supposed to be real. However, what is outside (mirrored in the background) gives meaning to what is presented. Fowles' text is similar in the respect that the reader, reading the novel, gives meaning to the author's game. The text has got an addressee and is never

complete without it. Just like the half-present king from the painting completes the triangle in Velasquez's work, the reader completes the triangle between Fowles, the reader and the pawn-characters.

I believe that perhaps one of the most basic explanations of Fowles' use of the visual is his gender. As a man, he dwelt in a literary world which made no claim and no effort to understand women. What is more, his literary works are based on women's unknowability. Men are not good at empathy. What is left is to observe, to gaze, to watch from various perspectives.

*What I really meant is that they are not to be understood by traditional male standards. Like most male artists, I have a strong female component in my character, just as most women artists have a strong male one. This may help us in creating characters of the opposite sex, but of course we're always, finally, no more than sympathetic visitors in a foreign country [...] not natives. If my women characters seem short in motivation and analysis – I suppose most notoriously in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* – it is because I am writing from the standpoint of this male visitor.* (Brooke 2008:30)

Fowles, acutely aware of all his shortcomings, prefers to describe women like pictures, works of art or exotic landscapes. On such ground, he prefers to move in an area much closer and much more familiar – the visual. He is distant towards them, more like an admirer than a connoisseur:

For a moment they are, Mr. Bartholomew with his bald head, Fanny with her painted face, like pantaloon figures from some fête galante by Watteau. (1996a:53)

Sarah was intelligent, but her real intelligence belonged to a rare kind; ... She had some sort of psychological equivalent of the experienced horse-dealer's skill – the ability to know almost at the first glance the good horse from the bad one; as if, jumping a century, she was born with a computer in her heart. (1996c:57)

Charles treated Sarah like a work of art. She was mysterious, she was an enigma, so fascinating because she could not be understood by anyone, even by herself. (1996c:431)

The gleaming body lay in its greenish-tawny lake of light, without movement; and she stared at me as from a canvas. The tableau pose was held so long that I began to think this was the great finale; this living painting, this naked enigma, this forever unattainable.

I had assumed it was Lily... (1996d:539)

Fowles plays with visual practices and although most of his novels do not seem to be cinematic in most aspects (with the exception of *Daniel Martin*), they do, however, present a deep fascination with what is to be observed and incorporating it into the novel. In Fowles' works, everybody watches – both the characters and the reader. In terms of the plot, it is the man who is the observer.

They (Clegg, Nicholas, Charles, David, Daniel, Miles and Ayscough) watch the inexplicable women (Miranda, Alison, Lily/Julie, Sarah, Diana, Jane, Erato and Rebecca). Fowles' men are preoccupied with the visual, perhaps believing that this way they will be closer to breaking 'the Enigma code' of women. They never do, but they never stop watching either. A fact which creates a particular vantage point for the readers, for whom the framing lens becomes the narrator or, even more often, the main character, a man. Fowles himself admitted that his work is a form of striptease (Lenz 2008:36), creating constant tension which prevails throughout the novel and makes it interesting for both men and women. Therefore Fowles' fiction is almost entirely visual, mostly based on a simple diagram:

the reader => the protagonist (a man) => the object of observation (a woman)
or
the reader => the object of observation (man or a woman)

Much of Fowles' work is based on watching. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the writer uses an interesting frame of a modern-century narrator who comments on the Victorian story. The centerpiece of the novel is Sarah Woodruff, a mysterious creature (like many Fowles' woman), an outsider, who can only be known via observation. Therefore Charles, the protagonist, observes. The reader is presented with an account of Sarah's activities, never being able to really 'look' inside her character. She is a vision in all meaning of the word. First, because the whole idea of the book was literally created from a vision. Fowles has once told how *The French Lieutenant's Woman* started as a visual image of a woman standing at the end of a deserted quay and staring out to sea. *This image rose in his mind one morning when he was still in bed half asleep, and it could be said that he wrote The French Lieutenant's Women to make sense of it. I sweat from ideas [...] to plots [...]*, wrote Fowles (1999:8) in one of his essays.

The Collector is based on a similar – if not stronger – participation of the visual. The novel opens with the protagonist's observation. Clegg watches Miranda as she leaves her home, reads books on the train, or goes to the library. The narrative technique is interesting in how it presents what happens when the captor (Clegg), having won a substantial sum of money in the lottery, decides to kidnap Miranda, whom he has been observing for a while, and imprison her for his own amusement. He finds a house which he purchases for the obtained money and plans to capture his future victim. The reader is presented with two narratives which gives a sense of both balancing and contrasting opposition of two strikingly different points of view and is, in a certain way, forced to follow the 'camera eye' and create new shots when the narrator changes.

What is interesting is the fact that Fowles skilfully combines painting, cinematic effects and game to create, what I try to illustrate by a specific triangle,

where all three elements permeate. In his art, observation is connected with game – the godlike author observes his characters and their doings. The reader, being a player himself, also observes. To read a novel and to ensure the pleasure of reading one has to accept the dual behaviour – the events presented throughout the book are only figments of the writer's imagination, but one has to read them as real. The godlike author gives himself the role of a director. In turn, to strengthen the effect of the cinematic effect of his books, he uses stills and pictures, which facilitate the projection.

As is illustrated, Fowles becomes the precursor of expressing himself with something more than words. Even though he does not practise it literally, he uses the visual and its possibilities in various forms, thanks to which he ceases to be solely a writer – he becomes a scriptwriter, a director, in a sense also a painter. In the times of television and the Internet – mostly visual media – Fowles was an optimist and an open creator. As he once stated in a conversation with Dianne Vipond (1999:198) *The arts must be allowed to evolve.*

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