

Dedications

To:

My dear parents whose affection, love, encouragement and prayers made me able to reach this level of success.

My beloved brothers: Sami and Amazigh for their encouragement in moments of difficulty and stress.

My husband

My grandmother, Family and Friends

My dear binomial Kahina

Sabrina

To:

My sweet loving parents whose love, encouragement and prayers make me able to be successful

My dear sisters: Kenza, Faroudja, Sabrina

My dear brother: Mohand

My Family and Friends: Ferial and Kenza

My dear binomial Sabrina

Kahina

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Abstract

The present dissertation is a psychoanalytical study in which we have made a parallelism between two literary works'; the novel of the English writer John Fowles *The Collector* (1963) and *You* (2014) written by the American novelist Caroline Kepnes. The comparison is concerned with showing the protagonists' psychological state focusing on the theme of obsessive love. To achieve our goal, we have relied on Susan Forward and Graig Buck's theory entitled *Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go* (2002). We have shown how both novelists tackle the issue of obsessive love in their works. Thus, in our dissertation, we have revealed the main characteristics of obsessive love cited in the previous theory. Furthermore, we have exposed the reaction of the targets Miranda and Beck towards the excessive behavior of their obsessors as well as the difficulties they may face to prove their decision of breaking up. We have found that the two targets of the novels react in the same way using nearly the same methods including being assertive either in their statements and actions or using the double messages which consist of false promises and statements.

Key words: breaking up, excessive behavior, Obsessive love, obsessors, reaction, target.

Contents

Dedications	I
Acknowledgments	II
Abstract	III
Contents	V
I. General introduction	1
1. Review of literature	2
2. Issue and working hypothesis	5
Endnotes.....	6
II. Methods and Materials	7
1. Methods	7
Susan Forward and Graig Buck theory of Obsession	
2. Materials	10
A. Synopses of the novels.....	12
B. Methodological Outline.....	13
Endnotes.....	14
III. Results	15
IV. Discussion	17
Chapter One: The Main Characteristics of Obsessive Love in John Fowles' <i>The Collector</i> (1963) and Caroline Kepnes' <i>You</i> (2014)	
1. Idealized Lover	18
2. Stalking.....	20
3. Obsessive Jealousy	24
4. Rejection	29
5. Rage and revenge.....	34
Endnotes.....	40

Chapter two: Targets of Obsessive Lovers in John Fowles' *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes' *You* (2014)

1. Targets' Relationship with their Obsessive Lovers in <i>the Collector</i> (1963) and <i>You</i> (2014).....	43
2. The Methods adopted by targets to break up with their obsessive lovers	48
A. Miranda and Beck as Assertive Targets	48
1) Using assertive statements	49
2) Taking assertive actions	52
B. Miranda and Beck's shift to the use of the double messages	55
Endnotes.....	63
V. Conclusion.....	66
Bibliography.....	68

I. General Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, “obsession is the state in which a person’s mind is completely filled with thoughts of one particular thing or person, in a way that is not normal.”¹ That is to say, it is the state of being dominated by thoughts and feelings about the desire of possession. An obsessive person is the one who has excessive thoughts, feelings or actions in relation to his experiences and life conditions. Indeed, human beings are lustful creatures, they all have needs. However, the degree of obsession differs from one person to another, it increases as long as their obsessive thoughts or actions continue and decreases when these thoughts or actions weaken. Obsession is a psychological concept, it is not inborn; it is obtained from people’s thoughts, desires and needs. When someone is obsessed with something everything seems unessential for him except his obsession. Thus, several effects like criminal acts may occur if an obsessive person does not fulfill his desire.

As Psychoanalysis has a great impact on literature which is basically linked to the human mind.² The characters’ psychological conditions have been depicted thanks to the works of psychologists like William James’ theory about consciousness. The depiction is no more superficial as it used to be but a deep one. Many writers have relied on this field to write their novels like D.H Lawrence known for his psychological novels such as *Sons and Lovers* (1913). In our research work, we will portray the psychological issue of obsessive love in literature by showing how the modernist writers expose this concept in their literary works.

Grounded in all what has been said, the present work aims to shed light on the psychoanalytical perspective of the two novels that are respectively *The Collector* (1963) written by John Fowles and *You* (2014) written by Caroline Kepnes. These literary novels include different psychological themes, among which we state obsessive love. In our work, we will analyze the mental state of the novels’ protagonists and their dominant character as well as their targets of obsession’s reaction. In doing so, we would rely on different concepts

taken from Susan Forward and Graig Buck's book *Obsessive Love: When It Hurts Too Much to Let Go* (2002).

1. Review of The Literature

John Fowles' *The Collector* and Caroline Kepnes' *You* have received a large bulk of criticism from different perspectives. Among the critics concerned with Fowles' *The Collector*, Seungjay Lee's thesis entitled "Otherness, Recognition and Power: The Hegelian themes in John Fowles's the Collector" (2005). In his work, Lee analyses the relationship between the two main characters of the novel Clegg and Miranda by referring to the Hegelian themes of otherness, recognition and power. Moreover, he investigates the nature of the contrasting characters through examining the 'double narration' in the story and focusing on Fowles's style on exploring events.³ That is to say, Fowles gives his main characters the opportunity to narrate their own stories in their own way. In fact, Lee's theme provides readers with a brief explanation of the Hegelian themes in relation to Fowles' characters.

In his article entitled "Obsession's Prisoners" (1963), Alan Pryce-Jones states that John Fowles is a master storyteller who succeeds in exploring an exceptional case in his main protagonist. Pryce-Jones asserts that Fowles style of writing in *The Collector* tends "to revive the fading art of fiction by bringing back to it the plain excitement of suspense."⁴ In other words, Fowles's touch on adding suspense to the novel attracts the readers' attention widely and restores the main concepts of fiction. Pryce-Joyce argues that the fact of making the novel long is somehow unessential. He justifies this by relying on the fact that both chapters revolve around the same story. That is to say, the reader can explore and understand the whole story by reading only the first chapter which is told by Clegg without adding a second chapter from Miranda's perspective.

Another review of John Fowles's *The Collector* is Maria Marcella Gonzalez Gatti. In her essay entitled "Feminism in John Fowles's The Collector and a Maggot" (1993), she

compares the two novels from a feminist perspective. In that sense, Gonzalez Gatti focuses on the characterization of women in *The Collector* and their real position and role in society under the domination of men. According to Gonzalez Gatti, Fowles supports the idea that “women have accomplished as much as they have despite men’s tyranny and exploitation.”⁵ Therefore, she tries to interpret the kind of oppression that men impose on women’s personal lives.

Another interesting study is the one undertaken by Emine Akullah Dogan. In her essay “Neo-Victorian Materialisms in John Fowles’s *The Collector*” (2019), she treats Fowles’s *The Collector* from the neo-Victorian materialism perspective. Dogan claims that the material obsession is well apparent in this novel through the objectification and dehumanization of the female. He states that Clegg’s ‘material obsession’ is revealed through his collection of butterflies since childhood, and thus he resorts to collect women after possessing money. In other words, Dogan asserts that Clegg considers Miranda as an object but not as a woman or a human being.⁶

On the other hand, despite being a recent novel, Caroline Kepnes’ *You* has also been a target for many studies. In her article “Book Review: *You* by Caroline Kepnes” (2019), Chelsea Iverson claims that the story is told from the protagonist Joe’s perspective which makes the novel somehow disturbing and confusing. According to Iverson, Joe is both a strange and likeable person who tries to get the reader’s sympathy. Moreover, it happens that all the protagonist’s distorted reasons are completely justified. She claims that the reader’s point of view is totally different from that of the protagonist Joe and that all his acts and thoughts are considered unconscious, unacceptable and criminal.⁷

In her dissertation “An Analysis of the Female Character in Caroline Kepnes’s Novel *You*: Reading through Theory of Sexual Politics” (2020), Priyanka Gupta explores the issue of ‘subjugation and domination’ through her study of the novel’s main characters.⁹ Gupta

focuses on the representation and the position of female character in society and how gender roles affects on generations. In addition to that, she discusses and examines the feminist discourse and how female writers express the men's oppression on women in their works.

In a thesis entitled "An Analysis of Obsessive Love Disorder Portrayed on the Leading Character in Caroline Kepnes' *You*" (2019), Nadha tackles the issue of obsessive love relying on the psychological theory of obsessive love disorder developed by Bernhard Bogerts. Her analysis attempts to explore the main characteristics and causes of obsessive love through her study on the protagonist's behavior. Nadha's work serves to prove and identify the existence of the main characteristics of obsessive love disorder in the novel.⁹

To finish, in his official Twitter page, Stephen King views that in her novel *You*, Caroline Kepnes interprets and develops the issue of obsessive love in her protagonist Joe in an 'attractive way'. He also claims that the novel is a mixture of different writers "a little Ira Levin, a little Patricia Highsmith"¹⁰ what makes the novel so diverse in terms of style of writing. Stephen King also states that Kepnes's work is "Hypnotic and scary."¹¹ For him, this method makes the novel unique, original and full of suspense that it attracts the reader's attention.

It follows from the above critical reviews that *The Collector* and *You* have already been a subject for many literary critics that studied them in relation to different issues including gender, obsession and other themes. However, to our best knowledge, no comparative study has already been conducted to compare Fowles' *The Collector* and Kepnes' *You*.

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

The choice of a comparative frame for the study aims to put emphasize on the affinities of the characters' personalities and reactions to obsession. The selection of the two works, both of them belong to the western society which makes their work share many literary

affinities. Although, both novels are published in different periods of time, they have pictured the theme of 'obsessive love', nearly, in a similar way. Indeed, the development of technology has a great impact on the method used by the obsessors to achieve their goal. Since obsession is considered as a pathology which does not change with time or place, Susan Forward and Craig Buck in their book *Obsessive Love: when it Hurts too much to let Go* have treated some cases which are well relevant to the characters' thoughts and behaviors in the two selected novels.

Our task is to study Fowles' *The Collector* and Kepnes' *You* from a psychoanalytical perspective relying on the theory of obsession developed by Susan Forward and Graig Buck. We have selected this theory due to its relevance to our investigation. Our work is based on the affinities that exist between the two novels. We will focus on the authors' depiction of the obsessors' behavior and their main characteristics. Then, we will move to analyze the targets of obsessive love and their reactions towards their obsessors' suffocated behavior. We will focus on the common methods they have used to break up with their obsessors such as 'being assertive' or using 'the double messages' in addition to the difficulties which hinder them to do so.

End notes:

- ¹ Oxford Learners' Dictionaries, "Obsession," 2022, accessed on January 4th, 2022 https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/american_english/obsession#:~:text=1%5Buncountable%5D%20the%20state%20in,flying%20is%20bordering%20on%20obsession
- ² Celine Surprenant, "Freud and Psychoanalysis in Patricia Waugh," (Oxford University Press, 2006), 200.
- ³ Seungjay Lee, "Otherness, Recognition, and Power: The Hegelian Themes in John Fowles's The Collector," (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea, 2005), 9-28.
- ⁴ Alan Pryce-Jones, "Obsession's Prisoners," (The New York Times, July 28th, 1963), 200.
- ⁵ Gonzalez Gatti, "Feminism in John Fowles's The Collector and a Maggot," (the Graduate Faculty of Texas Tech University, 1993).
- ⁶ Emine Akullah Dogan, "Neo-Victorian Materialism in John Fowles's The Collector," (Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences, 2009), 130-138.
- ⁷ Chelsea Iverson, "Book Review: You by Caroline Kepnes," Richmond News, Mai 5th, 2019, accessed on June 6th, 2021 <https://www.richmond-news.com/living/book-review-you-by-caroline-kepnes-3099024>
- ⁸ Priyanka Gupta, "Analysis of the Female Character in Caroline Kepnes's Novel You: Leading through Theory of Sexual Politics," (Mithibai College, 2020), 5-16.
- ⁹ Nadha, "Analysis of Obsessive Love Disorder Portrayed on the Leading Character in Caroline Kepnes's You," (University of Sumatera Utara Medan, 2019).
- ¹⁰ Stephen King, Twitter Web, December 16th, 2014. <https://twitter.com/stephenking/status/544696532902371328>
- ¹¹ Ibid.

II. Method and Materials

To realize our work, we are going to rely on Susan Forward and Graig Buck's theory in their book entitled *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go* (2002). In this section, we will explore some concepts of this theory that are related to our work. Then, we will provide a short synopsis of their works.

1. Method

In their book entitled *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts Too Much to Let Go* (2002), Susan Forward and Graig Buck explain the case of people who love in an obsessive way and how that affects their behavior. Forward and Buck affirm that obsession is not inborn. That is to say, most obsessive persons are ordinary people who live a simple life as many others do until they fall in love, many physical and mental changes occur. Obsessive love is 'destructive'; it may provoke life disorders and make the obsessive persons out of control. They feel controlled by their own needs and desires which result in an obsessive behavior.

Forward explains how a person in a healthy relationship and an obsessive lover manage their relationships. She states that in the healthy relationship, lovers act in a conscious way whereas obsessive lovers never give up until they obtain their needs of being with the person they love. In fact, they consider their target as 'ideal', the one and the only one who can make them feel as a whole person. For obsessive lovers, possessing their beloved is a necessity for being a complete person. They believe in the idea that his presence in their life is a necessity.

In her book, Forward claims that obsessive people may fall in love with their target from the first sight. According to her, there is no 'prerequisites' for choosing the target of their obsession. They think that their target is the perfect person who has the ability to fulfill their needs and desires. Indeed, they are convinced by the relationship they create in their mind. Forward states: "We go out of our way to see only what we want to see, filtering our

perceptions through romantic expectations and dreams. This optimistic filtering of reality is called 'idealization.'¹² Obsessive lovers generally build dreams and expectations they also create imaginary relationships in their mind. Forward states that targets are considered as the 'One Magic Person' who has the ability to change obsessors' life regarding their behavior and attitudes.

According to Forward, most obsessive lovers share the same behavior. She says: "Just as the trapper stealthily shadows his quarry without alerting it to his presence, many obsessive lovers covertly stalk their targets."¹³ Generally, they stalk their targets in order to gather information about him/her and everything in relation to his/ her life. Stalkers use different ways including technology and social media means which allow them to discover the target's location, his/ her work's place and even his/ her family and friends. In addition, they pursue their targets from place to place all the time for the sake of being close to them.

Jealousy is an emotion that features most obsessive lovers. They always feel jealous over all what can be an obstacle in their relationship with their targets that makes them oversensitive and act aggressively. Forward claims that this extreme jealousy is a mental illness called 'Paranoid Personality Disorder' which describes "someone who is frequently envious, suspicious, oversensitive and often hostile."¹⁴ Forward suggests that if the relationship is still in progress, obsessors may provoke violent behavior.

The writer deduces that we can distinguish between a healthy relationship and an obsessive love only if the fact of rejection occurs. She states that: "rejection is the obsessors's ultimate nightmare."¹⁵ When an obsessive lover feels rejected and unwanted he enters into a form of depression, panic and insecurity. The possibility of being left and rejected by his target makes him so afraid. Therefore, obsessors resort to rationalize and find excuses for their targets' behavior or minimize all their harming actions and words in order to protect their feelings from being hurt and disillusioned. Obsessive lovers devote all their energy to do

whatever they can so as to avoid this rejection, by trying to guess the kind of person their targets want them to be. As the fact of leaving is not acceptable for the obsessors, they often think about committing suicide.

Forward uses Machiavelli's famous quotation "the end justifies the means" expressed in chapter XVIII of his book *The Prince* to explain what unspeakable acts can be undertaken by obsessive lovers just to keep their lovers by their sides after realizing that they go to a no-win situation. To be more explicit, since love cannot be born by force and obsessors finally recognize that the relationship is rejected and all their attempts to save it fail, the emotion of rage appears. Once this emotion enters the relationship, obsessors always behave unconsciously so that dangerous acts occur. They start, thus, to fantasize vengeful actions to regain power

The extreme anger pushes obsessive lovers to seek revenge because they are incapable of seeing their targets leaving them. Since they are hurt by their targets, their reaction is often aggressive and unexpected. In reality, the obsessive lovers unwillingly become violent and hostile against their targets and damage their property to calm their pain. Forward claims that "Revenge is the end of the road for obsessors. It is the point at which they finally give up the crusade to recapture their One Magic Person and devote themselves to a new goal: punishing the person who had caused them such pain."¹⁶ Most obsessors destroy the target's life whether emotionally by causing them fear, annoyance or physically by damaging their properties and harming their relatives. Finally, revenge may extend till the uncontrollable acts mostly lead to a tragic ending of the target.

The need of revenge often overcomes the obsessors' mind to the point of dreaming and imagining different acts which can help them to calm their pain. In fact, Sigmund Freud has treated another signification of dreams which consists on the hidden fulfillment of different feeling and desires that people may have. Freud believes that dreams are manifestations of

one's fears and desires which occupy his mind. In his theory entitled *The Interpretation of dreams*, Freud developed the psychological technique by which dreams could be interpreted and how we can understand the motives and symbols that appear in one's dreams.

On the opposite side, when analyzing the behavior of the target of an obsessive lover, Forward considers them as being 'forgotten victims' who do not receive support from anyone despite the pressure they undergo. The targets' reaction towards an obsessive lover varies according to the situation in which they are. It happens that most targets experience the feeling of being oppressed and suffocated and hence try to break up with their obsessive lovers. In such circumstances, it is preferable to targets to be assertive and honest in their statements and actions to prove and reinforce their decision of breaking up with their obsessors. Indeed, some targets sometimes find themselves condemned by their feelings of guilt, compassion and sexual desire.

However, since it is generally not easy for obsessive lovers to survive the breakup, targets resort to a substitute method and do whatever they find necessary to get rid of their obsessors. Forward calls this way 'double messages' which is totally the opposite of being 'assertive' in both statements and actions, as targets say or do things that do not correspond to their real and true desire. The aim through doing so is to distance themselves from the obsessive lover but, unfortunately, they just worsen the situation. In fact, obsessors who do not understand these messages, that is to say, the target's words or acts, believe they are loved and valued while it is quite the opposite. Thus, double messages generally aggravate the situation for both obsessors and targets.

2. Materials

A. Synopsis of John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes's *You* (2014)

a. Synopsis of John Fowles's *The Collector*

The Collector is a novel which tells the story of a psychotic young man Frederick Clegg who is obsessively in love with a young art student Miranda Grey. In fact, Clegg's obsession leads him to kidnap Miranda and hold her in a cellar of his farmhouse. The novel is divided into four parts narrated by the two main characters where each one of them told his own story in his own way.

The first part is narrated by Clegg who starts speaking about Miranda's beauty and behavior and expressing his admiration of her from the first sight. From the very beginning, the reader may notice Clegg's mental state. Clegg affirms that his childhood was not easy for him. In reality, he was just two years when he lost his father in an accident, and then he lived with Aunt Annie and her daughter after being forsaken by his mother. These serial events affected badly his psyche and made him feel the need to be loved. Consequently, this pushes him to look for his missing emotions from his beloved Miranda.

Clegg used to collect butterflies since childhood. However, his passion urged him to add something special to his collection. As a first step, Clegg starts stalking Miranda in order to gather any information about her. In a rainy day, he takes advantage of kidnapping and taking her to his isolated house in the countryside. Clegg claims that despite this wrong act, she will certainly love him by the end since he has pure feelings for her.

The second part of the novel is the one narrated from Miranda's perspective. This part shows Miranda's feelings and reactions to Clegg's obsession. In fact, she tries aimlessly to

convince him to let her go, but Clegg asserts that he cannot even dare to imagine his life without her. She thus makes several attempts to escape. In this part, Miranda expresses her feelings of loneliness and fear, so the only thing she can do is to write down all her messy thoughts. Indeed, she writes those words for her ex-boyfriend G-P hoping that he will find her one day before Clegg kills her. Miranda feels sick after a long time of imprisonment. She asks for a doctor but Clegg does not believe her, thinking that she is only pretending illness to find a way to run.

The third part of the novel is told from Clegg's perspective. He expresses his feelings when he lost Miranda. The target of his obsession is finally dead after a long period of illness. However, after reading Miranda's diary, Clegg finally realizes that she does not love him and considers him just as a monster, and the only thing she was thinking about was finding a way to get rid of him.

The final part is also narrated by Clegg in which he displays his feelings after reading Miranda's words and claims that she deserves what happens to her. Then, he finally declares his obsession with another girl whom he saw in the street. To his surprise, the girl's name also starts with 'M', the same letter as Miranda and looks too much like her. This ending suggests another victim of obsession for Clegg.

b. Synopsis of Caroline Kepnes's *You*

The story is about the obsession of a bookstore worker called Joe Goldberg with a young writer Guinevere Beck. This obsession starts the first time Joe sees Beck in his bookstore. It was a love from the first sight. Thus, Joe's life has completely changed and he quickly becomes obsessed with his target Beck.

The first act he does was stalking. He is able to know her name while having a conversation with her at the bookstore. Then, he stalks her to find out her address by using

internet and social media. He then moved to spy on her through her house's windows. One day as Joe was following her, she had an accident in a subway station, and he could save her life. Thus, it is a chance for him to steal her phone and use it to read the mass e-mails she sends to her friends. He suddenly finds out that she is still in contact with her ex-boyfriend Benji what makes him feel jealous.

Joe believes that Benji is an obstacle in his relationship with Beck. Consequently, the only solution which sprang into his mind is to kill him and kill everyone who poses a threat to his relationship with her, including her friend Peach and her therapist Dr. Nicky. Beck is not aware of all what is happening. She starts losing her friends one after another, which makes things seem obscure.

After all these criminal acts, Joe finally manages to get close to Beck. Yet, it has not taken too long for Beck to recognize his obsession and all what he has done to possess her. In fact, she finds all her missing objects inside a box in Joe's bathroom. It was a strong shock for her as she starts to believe how dangerous staying with Joe is. So, she begins pulling herself back from him and accusing him of doing such acts. Joe is forced to imprison Beck in the cage of his bookstore. After many attempts to escape, Joe is finally forced to kill her. The novel ends up with Joe seeing another girl, and announcing that he is going to know her more. This ending suggests that the girl is going to undergo the same nightmare as Beck.

B. Methodological Outline

The following section of our work will include "The Method and Materials" section in which we will provide a brief summary to Susan Forward's theory of obsessive love as well as the synopsis of John Fowles' and Caroline Kepnes' works *The Collector* and *You*. The "Results" section will be devoted to the findings of our research. The next section is the "Discussion" which will be divided into two chapters. The first chapter will be devoted to the analysis of the protagonists, Clegg and Joe, and the characteristics that make them obsessive

lovers. In the second chapter, we will shed light on the reaction of the targets of obsessive lovers, Miranda and Beck. Our work will end with a “General Conclusion” that will summarize the main issues treated in this piece of research.

End notes:

¹² Susan Forward and Graig Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go* (United States and Canada: Bantam Books, 2002), 19.

¹³ *Ibid*, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 55.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 66-67.

III. Results:

This part of research points out the finding reached after our comparative study of John Fowles' *The Collector* and Caroline Kepnes' *You*. We have come to the conclusion that both works are similar in relation to the psychoanalytical issue of 'Obsession'. To achieve our aim, we have relied on the theory of obsessive love introduced by Susan Forward and Graig Buck in their book *Obsessive love: When it hurts Too Much to Let Go* (2002).

In the first chapter of our dissertation, we have mainly mentioned some important concepts that Susan Forward has discussed in her theory of obsessive love like idealization, stalking, obsessive jealousy, rejection, rage and revenge. We have analyzed the main characters' behavior towards their targets in relation to the previous concepts. We have come to the first result which is that the two main characters in John Fowles and Caroline Kepnes Clegg and Joe experience the same features of obsessive love.

In fact, both characters view the women they love as being 'ideal' and 'perfect', and in order to get informed of their news, they rely on stalking them. Furthermore, contrary to other lovers, the two protagonists do not accept to let their targets go or get engaged with another man. They go further to the point of committing awful acts in case they are exposed to rejection.

In the second chapter, we moved to analyze the reactions of Miranda and Beck as being targets of obsessive love. We have come to the conclusion that both targets have struggled against their obsessors' behavior. We have pointed out through our study of John Fowles and Caroline Kepnes's works that Miranda and Beck have followed two ways to get rid of their destructive relationship, considering assertive statements and actions as well as the use of the 'double messages' . Moreover, we have mentioned some difficulties they might face when trying to break up with their obsessive lovers.

The present research involves a detailed analysis of the concept of obsessive love as examined in the theory of Susan Forward and Graig Buck. The study reveals that despite the fact that the two authors belong to different periods, their works share many literary affinities. In fact, both writers have succeeded in portraying the obsessive lover and the target in a quite similar way.

IV. Discussion:

In this part of our work, we shall analyze the main characters of the literary works, *The Collector* and *You* by making reference to Susan Forward and Graig Buck psychological concept 'Obsessive love'. This discussion is divided into two chapters: the first is entitled "The Main Characteristics of Obsessive Love in John Fowles' *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes' *You* (2014)". In this chapter, we will explore the main characteristics of obsessive love of the protagonists Clegg and Joe in both novels through our analysis of their behavior and thoughts. The second chapter entitled Targets of Obsessive Lovers in John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes's *You* (2014) is concerned with the relation of both targets Miranda and Beck with their obsessors and the way they face their obsessive and suffocated behavior. Furthermore, we will demonstrate the target's strong desire to break up with their obsessors as well as the difficulties that hinder them to succeed in doing so.

Chapter One: The Main Characteristics of Obsessive Love in John Fowles' *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes' *You* (2014)

Love is considered to be the most beautiful feeling that anyone may experience. It is a healthy and irresistible emotion which grows up when two individuals are engaged in a serious relationship or even without being engaged. When an individual first falls in love, only his behavior and attitudes can prove his sincere attention towards his or her beloved. In reality, love means understanding, caring and wanting the best for the loved one.

A romantic love can gradually turn into an obsession which includes excessive thoughts about the loved person, and that often becomes so hard to control. As an unhealthy type of love, obsessive love is the main theme that John Fowles' *The Collector* and Caroline Kepnes' *You* have dealt with. They successfully depict the case of being obsessed through the

interpretation of acts and thoughts of their protagonists Clegg and Joe who cling to the idea of possessing their beloved Miranda and Beck.

In this chapter, we will study the behavior and attitude of someone obsessed and how he acts over his target. We will analyze the main characteristics of obsessive love which is the reason behind being out of control. Thus, the obsessor's unconsciousness generally leads them to do criminal acts which often end up by disasters.

1. Idealized lover

The first time we fall in love, it is natural to be hopeful and optimistic. Generally, a lover expects and sees only the good side of his target. These expectations make him believe that his target is the ideal person who can provide him happiness. In John Fowles's *The Collector*, the reader may notice Clegg's admiration and passion towards Miranda. Clegg's obsession makes him consider her as the perfect woman with whom he can build the life he always wanted. These words "I can't say what it was, the very first time I saw her, I knew she was the only one"¹ proves Clegg's adoration towards his target Miranda and his ultimate passion to be with her. It also reveals the fact that it is a love from the first sight and that Clegg has quickly become obsessed with his beloved. In this sense, the protagonist Clegg uses this kind of expressions to display the fact that she is the only person he ever wanted.

For obsessor, there are no 'prerequisites' and basics for choosing their targets. In fact, they consider their targets as being the 'one magic person' who may fulfill all their needs and desires.² When Clegg saw Miranda for the first time, he was convinced that she is the magic and ideal person who cannot be replaceable. Indeed, according to him, no woman in the world can be as beautiful or lovely as her. In this statement "not like the other ones, even the pretty ones,"³ Clegg demonstrates the fact that Miranda is exceptional for him despite the beauty of the other ones, and indicates that she is the only beautiful and pretty person he had ever seen.

In reality, Clegg chooses Miranda unconsciously and sees her as an exceptional woman even if she may be not be seen the same way by other men.

Obsessive lovers often believe that only their targets have the power to make them feel like a whole person. Their obsession pushes them to think and believe that their targets have the ability to provide them with all the needed things like love and care and make them feel completed. Actually, Clegg considers Miranda as the only woman who may give him love, happiness and care. He claims that: “seeing her always made me feel like I was catching a rarity, going up to it very careful, heart-in-mouth as they say.”⁴ From this, we may understand that Clegg views his beloved as being special since he regards her as a rare woman. His admiration for Miranda permits him to be the most powerful person who deserves to possess a rare and exceptional person that no one may find elsewhere.

Obsessive lovers consider their targets as a necessity for life which cannot be changeable or replaceable. Clegg’s obsession leads him to feel that Miranda provides his life with a meaning since she is the purpose for whom he lives. He says: “you think I’m mad because of what I’ve done. I’m not mad. It’s just, well, I’ve got no one else. There’s never been anyone but you I’ve ever wanted to know.”⁵ Indeed, he was ready to do all what Miranda asks for since she is the only and ideal person who deserves love and respect. Clegg says: “I read in the paper the other day (Saying of the Day) –What Water is to the Body, Purpose is to the Mind. That is very true, in my humble opinion. When Miranda became the purpose of my life...”⁶ In this passage, Clegg compares the role of Miranda in his life to the role of water for the body and mind. Indeed, he uses the word ‘purpose’ to reveal the important place Miranda takes in his life.

Idealization is a psychological process, it happens when one person starts to increase his positive fantasy about his beloved. Forward claims that Idealization “is an optimistic filtering of reality.”⁷ In reality, obsessors’ thoughts will focus only on the qualities that their targets

have. However, these qualities do probably not even exist and obsessors try often to be creative about their targets.

Similarly to John Fowles' *The Collector*, in Caroline Kepnes' *You*, the main character Joe is an obsessive lover who considers his beloved Beck the one and the only one who deserves his love. Joe claims: "I'm so excited to see you that the world does not even exist right now."⁸ From what he says, he resorts to idealize his beloved Beck, believing that she is the perfect woman who makes his life valuable. In fact, seeing her by his side makes him ignore the entire world, and focus only on her.

Idealization allows Joe to keep his thoughts of Beck's perfection intact. Joe's obsession makes him consider his beloved to be undoubtedly the woman of his dreams. He asserts: "Every day I close up without finding anyone like you. Look at you, born into my world today."⁹ From this quotation, we may deduce that Joe's passion leads him to think that Beck is someone special, and he would never find someone like her. Thus, Joe's way of thinking shows that his desire towards Beck drives him to believe that she is the only one who fits him.

Moreover, obsessive lovers consider their target as the one who makes them valuable. In reality, Beck's presence in Joe's life makes him a powerful person and increases his self-esteem. In this sense, Joe affirms: "I am the luckiest man in the world."¹⁰ Joe reveals the fact that being by her side is the only thing that makes him feel complete. For Joe, his beloved Beck is the one who may change his life for the best and her presence by his side provides him with power, strength and completeness. His obsession pushes him to feel safer with her, no troubles and no pressure and no further needs.

2. Stalking

Motives that lead to stalking vary according to the nature of a relationship.¹¹ Generally, a lover pursues his partner through few attempts in order to ensure the credibility of his

emotions. However, stalking can become excessive, invasive, frightening, and sometimes dangerous when it concerns an obsessive lover.¹² The latter is conducted by his obsession which leads him to make repetitive stalks to remove his feelings of suspicion and be closer to the target. Stalking is a ‘criminal behavior’¹³ which affects negatively the obsessors’ life as well as that of the target.

In this section, we will deal with the analysis of John Fowles’s and Caroline Kepnes’s characters in relation to stalking as another excessive behavior of the two protagonists Clegg and Joe. In this perspective, Forward states that: “just as the trapper stealthily shadows his quarry without alerting it to his presence, many obsessive lovers covertly stalk their targets.”¹⁴ This statement shows that obsessors stalk their targets without disclosing themselves. For instance, through his character Clegg, Fowles points out that stalking is the debut sign of Clegg’s obsession. Clegg says:

I waited for her to come out the next day and she did and I followed her about ten minutes through a lot of little streets to where she lives. I walked on past the house she went into and found out the number and then at the end of the road the name of it. It was a good day’s work.¹⁵

From the above quotation, we can clearly understand that Clegg’s obsession leads him to follow Miranda from place to place to gather more details about her location.

Almost all obsessors’ thoughts center on the necessity of being aware of all that is in relation with their targets. In fact, they always give ‘irrational’ excuses that are far from their real intention to justify their frequent stalks. Clegg’s suspicion and need for possessing Miranda increases, the fact that leads him to stalk her excessively. Clegg says: “Then she came out and instead of going up the hill like she usually did she went along another street. I followed her, I thought it was no good, I couldn’t understand what she was doing.”¹⁶ Indeed, his lust to know all about Miranda is not as a simple emotion of protection as curiosity. It is rather very strong so that it dominates his thoughts. Clegg’s behavior reveals that his curiosity

of knowing all that she is doing is something regular. All the time, he seeks for understanding the reason of her actions. So, he continues pursuing her secretly all day long and creates the excuse of 'I thought it was no good' to justify his actions.

On top of all that, it is so hard for stalkers to resist or break down with their excessive thoughts. This situation often influences their attitudes negatively. Therefore, their desire grows on and on till reaching the degree that being close to their target is something indispensable. In his novel, Fowles indicates that his main character is always searching for excuses to keep on his exaggerated stalking. By analyzing Clegg's words "for several days I watched for her but I didn't see her. It was very anxious time, but I kept on"¹⁷, we deduce that it is very difficult for him to get his obsessive thoughts out of his mind. Clegg's need for being with Miranda becomes an extreme attachment. As a consequence, the desire for possessing her and being all the time by her side grows up unconsciously. Clegg asserts "I flashed a look down the road, no one, and then I got her"¹⁸ to indicate that his stalking came to an end. After many attempts to keep Miranda under his control, he finally kidnaps and imprisons her in his own house.

Within the same context of Fowles's *The Collector*, Caroline Kepnes's *You* also tackles the theme of stalking of an obsessive lover. Hence, most obsessive lovers' pursuits are to keep contact with their targets. Stalking is one of the most used ways by obsessive lovers to be closer to their targets. In her novel, Kepnes turns her major interest on how an obsessive lover can be clever to attend his purpose of being closer to his beloved. Thus, the protagonist Joe starts stalking Beck from the time he becomes obsessed with her. His curiosity to discover every detail about her life pushes him to start his actions unconsciously by using the internet and social media as a first step. This passage reveals the very beginning of his stalking:

Your name was a glorious place to start. Lucky for us, there aren't a lot of Guinevere Becks in the world—just the one. The first thing I had to find was

your home and the internet was designed with love in mind. It gave me much of you, Beck, your twitter profile.¹⁹

Joe focuses only on how to get more and more information about Beck. He starts by searching in the internet to find her location. By using her name 'Guinevere Beck', Joe finds out her Twitter account, then her address. So, he finally fulfills his need and achieves his first goal successfully.

Even if an obsessive lover gets all the needed information about his target especially the location and workplace, he always feels the need to approximate their distance. Thus, he starts stalking his target whenever and wherever she goes and often takes the risk to go into her home. This can be seen when Joe stalks Beck and watches her outside her home he asserts:

I come in day, in night and whenever I am here, your windows are always open... with your open-door policy, I am allowed into your world. I smell your Lean Cuisines if the wind is the right and I hear your Vampire Weekend and if I pretend to yawn and look up, I can see you loaf, yawn, breath.²⁰

This means that Joe follows her into her house and observes her from the windows all the time, this is what makes him feel as if he lives with her. By that, Joe's behavior becomes uncontrollable. He always looks for Beck to get any information about her. He centers all his attention around her until pursuing her becomes a usual act.

As a criminal behavior,²¹ stalking often transforms to a dangerous act which affects negatively on the obsessors' life and even that of the target. Thus, obsessors generally do any act that comes into their mind without realizing the degree of danger which may result from that. After different and repetitive pursuits, they always devote themselves unconsciously to move on to another step. Kepnes, in her novel, illustrates through her protagonist Joe the kind of risks he takes because of his beloved Beck. Joe's needs are still increasing, and his desire to be with her is becoming bigger than ever. He states:

I called the gas company and reported a leak at your apartment when I knew you would be at your dance class and you always have coffee after class with a friend in the class and this is the only guaranteed time that you're away from your computer. I waited on my stoop across the way for gas man to arrive. When he did I told him I was your boyfriend and that you sent me to help out...he leaves and the first thing I do is take your computer and sit on your couch and I smell your green pillow.²²

After collecting the information he needs and following her from afar, the situation worsened more and more till the point where Joe finally enters to Beck's apartment without her permission and without leaving any trace of him.

Joe wants to interfere with Beck's personal affairs and gets involved in her plans. He is ready to do any act which comes into his mind to control Beck's life and be aware of every move she makes. So, the best way for him is to steal her phone in order to know each single detail about her since it contains all the interesting information he looks for. Joe asserts: "so I read the mass e-mail you sent to your friends announcing your new phone number because I can read all your e-mail!"²³ This shows clearly Joe's purpose and his real intention in stealing her phone. In fact, he uses Beck's phone stealthily in order to know all her plans and even get into her thoughts.

3. Obsessive Jealousy

Jealousy is one of the main characteristics of love, and an emotion that can exist in any relationship. It reflects love and care and increases intimacy between the two lovers. Generally, healthy lovers are totally aware of the value and the basis of a relationship and how they should face every detail to keep control. However, obsessive lovers are really affected by their obsession that makes their jealousy excessive and unjustified.

Obsessive jealousy is included in John Fowles' *The Collector* and Caroline Kepnes' *You* throughout their two main characters Clegg and Joe. The protagonist Clegg always feels

jealous over everything that can be an obstacle in his relationship with his beloved Miranda. In fact, this makes him oversensitive and starts having fear of losing her. Susan Forward claims that extreme jealousy is a mental illness that she calls 'Paranoid Personality Disorder.' which describes "someone who is frequently suspicious, envious, over-sensitive and hostile."²⁴

According to what has been said, we deduce that John Fowles's *The Collector* has pictured this issue of obsessive jealousy through Clegg's thoughts and behaviors. His extreme jealousy about Miranda makes him think all the time about her and what should be done to gain her love before someone else does. Clegg states: "I'm sorry I'm so suspicious, I said. It's just that you're all I've got that makes life worth living."²⁵ His intense jealousy and suspicion increases gradually until the moment where he takes the decision of kidnapping her in order to be closer to her. The only thing he thinks about is that nothing can take Miranda away from him even if he will be obliged to imprison her in his cellar forever.

Gregory L. White defines jealousy as "a complex set of thoughts, feelings and actions that follow a threat self-esteem and/ or threaten the existence or quality of the relationship."²⁶ In fact, jealousy combines the love of possession, the fear of losing someone and at the same time the desire to preserve him/ her. This is well illustrated when Clegg says that "She came out with a lot of other students, mostly young men. My heart beat very fast and I felt sick."²⁷ Clegg's discomfort with Miranda's social relationships is considered as the most relevant sign of his excessive jealousy because for him they are obstacles which may distract Miranda from him.

In reality, Clegg's excessive jealousy is an ambivalent emotion produced from the fact of thinking that he may lose Miranda. Clegg states:

A spokesman for the Slade School said: "she is one of our most promising second-year students. We are sure that there is some quit harmless

explanation for her disappearance. Artistic young people have their whims...one talked about Piers Broughton and how he and she were unofficially engaged. I wondered if he was the beatnik I saw her with. Another said, "she is one all the most popular student always willing to help." They all said she was pretty. There were photos. If she was ugly it would all have been two lines on the back page.²⁸

After kidnapping Miranda, everyone was looking for her. However, Clegg's jealousy leads him to focus more on what they said about her rather than realizing the danger he is in. Actually, he does not like the fact of speaking and describing her as someone pretty.

John Fowles' novel reflects the state of being excessively jealous by Clegg's excessive thoughts about Miranda. As most obsessive lovers, this excessive jealousy is always justified by Clegg as a mean of protection and an emotion of fear towards any bad issue that may hurt Miranda. Nevertheless, it produces on him the desire of owning her which raises an obsessive behavior as doing unconscious acts. Clegg asserts: "I was acting for the best and within my rights."²⁹ This excessive jealousy leads him to pursue Miranda wherever she goes to be aware of all what she is doing and with whom she is staying. Indeed, it is so hard for him to get these thoughts out of his mind and the idea of losing her still scares him.

As an obsessive lover, no matter what the reality may be, his obsession often draws on his mind the desire of possessiveness. Indeed, his excessive jealousy creates the desire of owning the person he loves. He claims: "she and the young man crossed the street. I got out of the van and followed them."³⁰ He adds to say: "I can't ever get to know her in the ordinary way, but if she's with me, she'll see my good points. She'll understand."³¹ his severe jealousy does not stop at the point of just wanting her to know him, but even isolating her from the entire world so that nothing would distract her. Then, in order to realize this perverted idea, he resorts to commit the most heinous crime which is kidnapping her.

Throughout our reading of Caroline Kepnes's *You*, we have noticed that obsessive jealousy is well manifested through the protagonist's thoughts and behavior. Joe is a dominant

character; his extreme jealousy extends widely until the point of doing monstrous acts. For instance, when Beck tries to contact her ex-boyfriend Benji, Joe's jealousy becomes excessive and he decides to steal Beck's phone to eliminate him from her life. Joe claims: "you're trying to talk to Benji...you seek him. You want him. But this will pass. And part of the problem is that phone...Enough with this phone, Beck. It's gonna do you in. waste your voice, and cripple your fingers."³² According to Joe, Benji is an obstacle in his relationship with Beck. Consequently, the only solution which comes into his mind is to kidnap and imprison him in the cage of the rare books of his bookstore. He is convinced that this act gives him the opportunity to be closer to Beck.

Furthermore, his delusive thoughts and huge expectations on Beck that she belongs to him increase his jealousy. Joe only wants Beck to exchange her feelings with him the way he does, and focus only on him. So, he starts removing all the obstacles which may destroy his plans to win her love. He is ready to do any crazy act to make his relationship with Beck perfect even by kidnapping or killing. Joe claims: "I'm ready to kill anyone who'd dare to look at you."³³ He adds: "Your Body and your hair and your lips and your thighs, everything, is for me."³⁴ In fact, his extreme jealousy affects negatively on his thoughts and behavior what pushes him to kill Beck's friends Benji and Peach. Joe states that "Everything looks different now and it's a problem. Peach is in love with you and you're mine and life is never going to be easy with her playing sick, playing victim, playing taken, playing anything to get your attention."³⁵ Joe's jealousy of Beck's spending time with her friends, and seeing her too close to Peach makes him anxious and afraid. This extreme jealousy provokes the unconscious behavior of Joe.

As it is stated above, it can be explained that obsessive jealousy is always produced when the fear of abandonment is implied. Hence, his belief that Beck belongs to him makes

the need of controlling and possessing her life something natural. He feels the need to be with her every day, nothing and no one can prevent him from that. Joe asserts:

Wish I could pull you out of her [Peach] and take you to my borough. She's hypocrite, a fucking nightmare of person, worse than I imagined. You are soft and she is hard in skintight red skinny jeans you would never wear... You ooze joy and she is an open wound, shrill and wan, unfucked and unloved. She clearly wants you to herself.³⁶

Through this passage, Kepnes reveals the impact of jealousy on Joe's thoughts and attitudes. This passage exposes in one hand Joe's extreme jealousy over Beck as well as his hate to Peach being so close to her. On the other hand, his strong desire to keep everyone away from her so as to possess her alone.

Throughout the novel, the reader can notice that the protagonist Joe considers his deep and excessive jealousy as an emotion of fear which often means care, love and protection from everything he thinks dangerous. He argues about that saying: "She's [Peach] tragically obsessed with you and honestly, if anything, I'm just worried for you."³⁷ Joe is a troubled character, his jealousy drives him to think illogically and commit terrible acts without realizing it. His obsession conducts him to act in an unconscious way to just fulfill his need and desire to be with Beck.

According to Forward, obsessors with extreme jealousy generally get anxious more and more about their relationship with their targets. Indeed, they often have a suffocated behavior toward the targets of their obsession. In fact, this jealousy affects on Joe's thoughts to the point of thinking that even social media and friends may distract Beck from him. For instance, when Beck was chatting in her account, she takes long time to answer on his messages, he claims:

You haven't written back to me yet. You have forward my e-mail to Chana and Lynn... and exchanged dozens of idiotic e-mails about nothing. You

have found the time to read and respond to your classmates' short stories...
you are still in pursuit of Benji...Beck it's not funny anymore.³⁸

Joe is worried about how Beck behaves with him this is why he always spends time thinking and imagining excuses to convince himself that he must own her. His extreme jealousy leads to abnormal actions such as threats, beating and even assault. That is to say, it may reach the threat of death without any empathy or care to any person approaching his beloved. This is what happened actually, when reading the whole novel, one can understand that the behavior of the protagonist Joe indicates that he is an obsessive lover who has an excessive desire to possess the person he believes belongs to him.

4. Rejection:

Rejection is a painful response which any lover may receive from his beloved. In his TV show 'Dr. Phil', Phillip Calvin McGraw says: "the number one fear that people have is rejection, and the number one need is acceptance."³⁹ Rejection defines all the negative feelings that may disturb people's mind and leads them even to depression. For obsessive lovers, it is indispensable to react quickly and convince their target to come back in order to save their relationship. John Fowles' and Caroline Kepnes' novels reveal clearly rejection and their main characters' reactions to it.

Fowles' *The Collector* successfully presents the issue of rejection regarding the main protagonist. The fear of rejection or what Forward calls 'rejection anxiety' often leads to oppressive behaviors which may destroy any relationship. Clegg always worries about being rejected by Miranda before even announcing his admiration to her. In fact, this is what drives him to kidnap her to ensure that she will be under his power in case she does not accept him. When Miranda asks to know the reason of his act, he replies briefly "I just want to get to know you."⁴⁰ From these words, we may understand that Clegg's fear of rejection makes him unable to face Miranda with truth. It is so hard for him to express his feelings. Actually, in

spite of Miranda's will to know Clegg's purpose from kidnapping her, he keeps hesitating to reveal his true feelings.

Within the same context, Clegg succeeds to completely hide his feelings by inventing stories so as to avoid Miranda's rejection. He prefers not to tell her about the main cause of kidnapping her, he claims:

I've always tried to explain, I mean invent stories to explain. Suddenly I saw a way out."

I said, I'm only obeying orders.

"Orders," she said. "Whose orders?"

I can't tell you.⁴¹

From this passage, we understand that when Miranda asks to know what is really happening, Clegg hesitates to tell her the truth and prefers to lie so he invents the story of 'obeying orders' in order to protect himself from her reaction.

Obsessive lovers often try to please their targets to avoid rejection by supposing the kind of person they want them to be. For instance, Clegg is ready to sacrifice all his needs in order to satisfy Miranda even if that can cause him difficulties in his life. He declares: "if you asked me to stop collecting butterflies, I'd do it. I'd do anything you asked me."⁴² This demonstrates that Clegg is ready to accept all Miranda's demands, even preventing himself from collecting butterflies, the hobby which he has been obsessed with since his childhood. His anxiety of rejection pushes him to change his attitudes and accept to be the kind of person Miranda can accept.

As Forward claims in her book, when rejection comes to its high level, obsessors always seek for 'minimizing' the degree of what is happening by denying the reality. That is to say, obsessors underestimate the importance of their targets' actions and words despite the pain they cause. In fact, the protagonist Clegg tries to reduce the importance of Miranda's acts, words and reactions in order to deny the truth behind them. When Miranda says: "You're

not a human being. You're just a dirty little masturbating worm,"⁴³ Clegg simply claims: "I acted like I hadn't heard; I just went and got her breakfast."⁴⁴ These words are a compelling example of how Clegg minimizes the accusing words of Miranda. In fact, Clegg tries not to give importance to any negative word his beloved says to him and reacts calmly and keeps his silence in order not to feel painful when she insults him of being inhuman. He also finds excuses, such as "I knew she was angry"⁴⁵ to calm his pain and avoid this rejection.

As another reaction for obsessive lovers to gain their targets sympathy as well as to avoid their rejection's pain, is threatening their targets to 'commit suicide'. In fact, Clegg's obsession and fear of losing Miranda makes his thoughts in a complete chaos. He cannot resist the fact that Miranda tries several times to run away. These words "if you went, I think I'd do myself in,"⁴⁶ demonstrate the idea of threatening Miranda of committing suicide. He considers the presence of Miranda in his life as a matter of survival, otherwise, he would probably put an end to his life.

Similarly to what has been said about Clegg in *The Collector*, the protagonist Joe in Caroline Kepnes's *You* is also rejected by the target of his obsession. Actually, it is difficult for obsessors to accept the fact of being rejected as they consider it hard for them to love someone else again. Beck's rejection makes Joe's pain inevitable, her actions and behavior makes things clear. Beck refuses Joe's request for meeting him. This dialogue demonstrates the fact that she starts gradually neglecting him by underestimating his messages:

But this is what surprises me. A day later—you didn't even wait a whole day—you texted me:

Hey Joe, I can't make it in today. Sorry!

And that exclamation point was the beginning of the end of us and I made a mistake by writing back: Okay!

And then you made plans to go out with Lynn and Chana instead of seeing me.⁴⁷

Joe's obsession and excessive thoughts about possessing Beck make him extremely worried about the idea of being rejected. He always feels the need of being with her despite the harm she inflicts on him by her neglect.

The fact of imprisoning Beck in the cage is considered as a sign of Joe's refusal of rejection. In this sense, each time Beck is begging Joe to let her go, his excessive attachment prevents him from freeing her. This is well explained in their conversation:

You let me out of here, and I'm gone forever

I give you another chance." I don't want you to be gone, forever"

"Oh come on," you say like a friend

"Beck, stop." Tell me you want me.⁴⁸

In reality, Joe is ready to keep her imprisoned in the cage than let her go. He is doing so hoping that she can at last change her mind and stay with him as he cannot go with the idea of rejection.

In addition, 'minimizing' is one of the main techniques used by Joe to deny the reality and the emotion of pain which is caused by Beck's rejection. Joe's obsession pushes him to reduce the importance of Beck's hurting words and actions by focusing only on interpreting her behavior and attitudes in a positive way. In spite of all her insults, Joe keeps believing that her anger and rejection are temporary and that will certainly be converted over time. After Beck finds out the box which contains her own belongings and becomes aware of Joe's obsession, her anger makes her act irrationally, using obscene words and outrageous accusations against him. Joe states:

You snarl and call me a fucking sicko.

I know you don't mean it. If you were truly afraid, you would make a serious attempt to "escape." But the fact is that I know you. I know you are pleased with your discovery. You like attention and devotion and that box is proof that I am attentive.⁴⁹

In spite of Beck's hurting words and her efforts to escape, Joe reduces the importance of what is happening so as to avoid the pain caused by her rejection. His obsession leads him to disclaim the evidence which affirms Beck's refusal. In fact, he tries to convince himself that Beck doesn't really mean what she is saying.

In the same context, one may notice the several declarations that reveal his reaction towards Beck's rejection. For instance, the only solution he adopts is reacting calmly and 'ignoring' all Beck's hurting words and accusations. He claims: "I ignore (again)...because I can't bear the idea of you screaming in fear at me and accusing me of being a stalker."⁵⁰ In fact, Joe resorts often to minimize Beck's words and actions by ignoring any fact that may disturb his emotions and feelings.

Another frequent part of denial according to Forward is 'rationalization'. It is also well manifested in Kepnes's *You*. Even though Joe Goldberg is uncomfortable with Beck's behavior and her romantic and social links, he tries each time to justify and rationalize her through creating excuses. Accordingly, he convinces himself that all her wrong acts do not matter as long as she exchanges feelings with him. For instance, Beck's relationship with her therapist Dr. Nicky makes him feel rejected and unwanted, but he still dismisses the reality that she betrays him. Joe asserts by stating:

And the best part is, that I'm not afraid anymore. You're not sleeping with Nicky. You're just experiencing transference. I know about it from *The Prince of Tides*. It happens. Nicky has a master's and Nicky is the man and he'd never break the doctor-patient dynamic. It applies, even though he's not a real doctor.⁵¹

This passage reveals Joe's rationalizing rejection. By putting emphasis on this speech, one may understand that Joe can justify any behavior from Beck even her intimate relationship with doctor Nicky in order to protect himself from the painful feeling of rejection.

5. Rage and Revenge

When the value and the importance of a relationship start to fade, it is so hard for an obsessive lover to face it calmly. Thus, this fact often causes significant and great reactions from the obsessive lover towards his target. Generally, after a loss of control, emotions of rage and acts of revenge begin to overwhelm the obsessor's thoughts and behavior, what make the ability to overcome their psychological pressure a difficult process to achieve. Accordingly, John Fowles' *The Collector* and Caroline Kepnes' *You* expose the issue of rage and revenge through their main characters' thoughts and behavior.

When the fact of rejection imposes in any relationship, obsessive lovers often react angrily and unconsciously. Susan Krauss Whitbourne claims that the more people place their expectations on others, the more likely they are to fall when things go wrong.⁵² Yet, their anger transforms into excessive rage towards their target in order to calm their pain. For instance, in Fowles' novel, it is so difficult for Clegg to control himself while Miranda neglects him and tries to escape each time despite the love and respect he gives her. In fact, these triggers of anger generate in him the feeling of rage what leads him to react violently towards Miranda. Clegg's statement "from now on I give the orders...I'm going to teach you a lesson"⁵³ illustrates well his rage which may be explained as his aggressive reaction to Miranda's rejection. Clegg has been exposed to the reality which has affected him negatively. Hence, his feeling of abandonment and powerlessness enrages him. This rage represents emotional violence that can harm Miranda's psyche and disturb her to a great extent.

According to many psychological studies, most obsessive lovers try to deny their negative feelings and thoughts about their targets' reactions such as the idea of rejection that irritates them so much. From this point, we may deduce that their excessive anger towards their targets grows on to reach the level of committing aggressive acts out of their awareness.

Thus, in Fowles' *The Collector*, Clegg's anger leads him to be hurtful against his beloved Miranda. His rage increases when Miranda decides to quit him and mostly when she makes several attempts to escape. As Clegg claims:

She pulled at it [the outer door] and banged it and went screaming on, but I got her then. I hated doing it but action was necessary. I got her round the waist and one hand over her mouth and dragged her down back. She kicked and struggled, but of course she was too small and I may not be Mr. Atlas but I am not a weakling either.⁵⁴

From the above quotation, we understand that his fear of losing Miranda and his shock about what she dares to do drives him to be mad to behave in a violent way. Indeed, he considers this act as an obligation so as to avoid any sort of problems.

Actually, obsessive lovers are far from doing violent acts against others, especially their lovers. However; their obsessive rage often turns them into hostile persons. Clegg's passion and obsession for Miranda makes him ready to do whatever is necessary to keep her by his side, except the idea of hurting her that he often eschews. Clegg argues: "because I didn't want to kill her, which was the last thing I wanted."⁵⁵ This idea shows that he has always wanted to keep her safe as long as she accepts his love. In fact, this idea of hurting or killing Miranda is Clegg's last concern, since he never dares to do such an act in his life. Indeed, his desire of having Miranda forbids him from killing her in spite of his extreme anger.

According to Sigmund Freud, dreams represent the hidden fulfillment of our unconscious wishes.⁵⁶ That is to say, all people's desires and thoughts that occupy their minds can come as dreams. Since rage is an uncontrollable feeling, it always affects greatly the obsessors' thoughts until the act of revenge appears. Consequently, the obsessive lover starts to 'fantasize vengeful acts' against his target in order to calm his pain. In fact, the emotion of rage influences Clegg's thoughts negatively to the extent of dreaming about killing her. Clegg claims about this by stating "I had a horrible dream one night when they [police] came and I

had to kill her before they came in the room. It seemed like duty and I had only a cushion to kill her with.”⁵⁷ In this passage, Clegg’s dreams interpret his hidden thoughts that are produced from his rage towards Miranda’s acts. That is to say, his thoughts of revenge increase as the emotion of rage becomes excessive and uncontrollable.

The ‘Emotional violence’, as an act of revenge, is one of the most prominent techniques used by obsessors to manipulate their target’s feelings. They often urge their targets to feel scared and disappointed. According to this idea, Clegg tries to control Miranda’s feelings and thoughts by threatening her in order to payback her rejection. He claims: “I suppose you’re in love with that Piers Broughton, I said. I wanted to give her a jolt. She was really surprised, too.”⁵⁸ In fact, Clegg discloses an issue that happened to Miranda in the past in order to scare her, he asserts: “I looked nasty just to give her a scare.”⁵⁹ These quotations reveal his purpose which is making her afraid and destructing her psychologically.

For most obsessive lovers, punishing and even assaulting their targets is the only way to get rid of their rage and make them feel at ease. Therefore, obsessors’ excessive anger may lead them to the highest degree of harshness. Clegg’s rage grows each time Miranda proves her desire of getting away from him. Thus, his rage about her rejection escalates into committing vengeful acts against her. These acts of revenge are apparent in Clegg’s speech when Miranda does not obey his orders:

I went out and bolted up. I didn’t take her any supper, I let her stew in her own juice...I felt happy, I can’t explain I was weak before, now I was paying her back for all the things she said and thought about me. I walked about upstairs, I went and looked at her room, it made me really laugh to think of her down there, she was the one who was going to stay bellow in all senses and even if it wasn’t what she deserved in the beginning she had made it so that she did now. I had real reasons to teach her what was what.⁶⁰

It is so clear that Clegg’s rage towards Miranda turns into an aggressive behavior. He feels powerful and excited to punish her for all what she has done since she deserves that. For

Clegg, these vengeful acts are a lesson for Miranda to impose his mastery and dominance and hand off his harmful emotions.

The obsessive lovers' aggressive reaction becomes 'inevitable' when the emotion of rage appears. This emotion increases according to repetitive triggers that often lead to uncontrollable acts. The emotion of rage becomes a question of necessity to get rid of the harmful emotions. Similarly to what has been said about John Fowles's novel, Caroline Kepnes's protagonist Joe also does not bear the fact of losing his beloved.

For instance, Beck's behavior clearly reveals the fact that she has no interest in Joe, after knowing about his acts, she does not even try to speak or understand his real intention from doing that. Indeed, she starts accusing him and then takes the decision to leave him. These serial events push Joe to lose his control and react unconsciously. By analyzing his words "I'll kill you if you scream."⁶¹ one may understand that Joe's anger jumps into its highest level. When Beck tries to run away, Joe threatens and asks her to stop. After all, the only irresistible truth for Joe is thinking about losing Beck forever. Thus, her rejection provokes extreme rage which, at its turn, brings about threats and even different violent acts.

When rejection enters a relationship, rage and love start struggling at the same time to control the obsessors' inner side. Despite the emotion of rage that makes Joe act unconsciously, his love for her keeps fighting for survival. Actually, Joe loses control on Beck when she starts screaming to let her go but that does not prevent him from being sorry to behave in such a way. He asserts "I count to three. I give you the chance to shut up. But you don't shut up and after three, I take your little head in my hand—sorry—and smash it against the wall—sorry. I'm lonely in the silence and I kiss your forehead."⁶² Joe's anger transforms into uncontrollable violence towards Beck but his love is still struggling to win. Though his intense anger towards her gets worse, he still feels passionately in love with her. In reality, as Forward explains, obsession makes love and rage go 'hand in hand' struggling to resist.

In her novel, Kepnes gives the reader a real image of an obsessive lover who can do all his best to win the love of his target. Sooner or later, this obsession will develop into an excessive behavior in case the obsessive lover cannot achieve his desire. As a result, vengeful acts are frequently the final step on which an obsessive lover centers all his attention. For instance, when Joe recognizes that his relationship with Beck will certainly end up inadequately, his act of revenge becomes the only solution which can help him overcome his pain.

Though, Joe's love to Beck is bigger, he starts now losing hope and giving up. Similarly to what has been said about Clegg, Beck's rejection also raises in Joe the desire to commit emotional violent acts. When Joe imprisons Beck in his bookstore cage, he was trying to make her frustrated and scared in order to destruct her psychologically. For instance, he prepared some questions to manipulate her thoughts, he claims:

I think I have memorized the treacherous e-mail between you and Dr.Nicky. I had to know them because I had to prepare an exam for you...you are shrieking. You should preserve your energy. "Okay Beck, that's enough." You look like hell, you poor thing. Your hair is wreck and you've been crying. "What are you trying to do to me, Joe?"⁶³

In that sense, Joe tries to intimidate Beck as a vengeful act to all what she did for him.

As we have stated above, an obsessive lover may also commit physical violence, which is frequently unusual towards his target as an act of revenge. Obsession often consumes the positive behaviors of obsessors. In reality, Joe is constantly ready to commit violent acts and even kill anyone who dares to take his beloved away from him. His rage leads him to commit all those violent acts including murder. After killing Beck's friends, he now moves to get rid of her. While Beck tries to save herself from Joe, he was forced to kill her. He claims:

I thank you for proving beyond a reasonable doubt that you are bad. You do not want love or life and we never had a chance and you are commonplace

and raw, gasping and gurgling. Solipsistic with your fudgy inconsiderate fingerprints ruining my books, my heart, my life.⁶⁴

Joe asserts that Beck is a bad person and that she deserves all what happens to her. At last, only negative and destructive results have been produced from Joe's obsession.

Obsessive lovers finally get into depression after losing their one magic person. This is what happens with the two protagonists Clegg and Joe after the death of their targets. However, both characters try to rebuild their lives again by finding another relationship. For instance, in Fowles's *The Collector*, Clegg is attracted by Marian, that shows the debut of a new obsession, he sets: "I ought to have got someone who would respect me more. Someone ordinary I could teach."⁶⁵ This statement reveals his need to achieve his desire even with another woman. Just like Clegg, Kepnes's protagonist Joe also moves to build another relationship with Amy whom he considers as his new obsession, he claims: "you [Beck] are gone, forever and she [Amy] is here, now."⁶⁶ Despite their excessive obsession with their targets, both Clegg and Joe finally decide to continue their life.

Endnotes

- ¹ John Fowles, *The Collector* (United States, Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 4.
- ² Susan Forward and Graig Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go* (New York: Bantam Books, 2002), 21.
- ³ Fowles, *The Collector*. 3.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid, 51.
- ⁶ Ibid, 18.
- ⁷ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go*, 2002. 19-20.
- ⁸ Caroline Kepnes, *You*, (New York: Atria/ Emily Bestler Books,2014), 52.
- ⁹ Ibid, 1.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 227.
- ¹¹ Paul E. Muller et al, “Study of Stalkers,” (The American Journal of Psychiatry, August 1st, 1999), 1246-1247.
- ¹² Meloy. J. R, “The Psychology of Stalking: Clinical and Forensic Perspectives,” (San Diego, Ca: Academic Press, 1998).
- ¹³ Miller Neal, “Stalking Laws and Implementation Practices: A National Review for Policymakers and Practitioners,” (United States: Institute for Law and Justice, 2002), 6.
- ¹⁴ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go*, 2002. 53.
- ¹⁵ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 22.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 23.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 21.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 24.
- ¹⁹ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 6.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 9.
- ²¹ Miller Neal, “Stalking Laws and Implementation Practices: A National Review for Policymakers and Practitioners,” (United States: Institute for Laws and Justice, 2002), 6.
- ²² Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 15.

- ²³ Ibid, 32.
- ²⁴ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go*, 2002. 55.
- ²⁵ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 51.
- ²⁶ Gregory L. White, "Some Correlates of Romantic Jealousy," *Journal of Personality* N 02. Vol 49. June, 1981. 24.
- ²⁷ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 12.
- ²⁸ Ibid, 40-41.
- ²⁹ Ibid, 120.
- ³⁰ Ibid, 12.
- ³¹ Ibid, 14.
- ³² Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 22.
- ³³ Ibid, 56.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 104.
- ³⁵ Ibid, 111-112.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 70.
- ³⁷ Ibid, 118.
- ³⁸ Ibid, 36.
- ³⁹ Dr. Phil. "the Number One Fear that People have is Rejection, and the Number One Need is Acceptance." YouTube Video, 04:07. April 29th, 2019. Accessed on October 2nd, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ij1HDq-DCII>
- ⁴⁰ Fowles, *The Collector*. 1963. 37.
- ⁴¹ Ibid, 29.
- ⁴² Ibid, 43.
- ⁴³ Ibid, 116.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid
- ⁴⁵ Ibid
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, 51.
- ⁴⁷ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 153.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 261.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 231.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 130.

⁵¹ Ibid, 186.

⁵² Susan Krauss Whitbourne. "Why Love can turn into Rage," Psychology Today. September 1st, 2015. Accessed on September 1st, 2021
[https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fulfillment-any-age/201509/why-love-can-turn-
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⁵³ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 117.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 43-44.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 39.

⁵⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Die Traumdeutung," (Vienna: Franz Deuticke, 1899). Trans. By Brill.A.A as "The Interpretation of Dreams," (New York: Barnes & Nobles Book, 1994).

⁵⁷ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 80.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 89.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 67.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 114.

⁶¹ Kepnes, *You*. 2014. 235.

⁶² Ibid, 235-236.

⁶³ Ibid, 240.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 263.

⁶⁵ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 304.

⁶⁶ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 269.

Chapter two: Targets of Obsessive Lovers in John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes's *YOU* (2014)

When people are engaged in a healthy relationship, their love keeps increasing and becomes a sacred relationship. However, when this love turns into an obsession, the relationship begins to take another path for both obsessors and targets. The latter are chosen randomly by their obsessors which mean any person may be the target of an obsessive lover.

Targets of obsessive lovers are often victims who suffer from pressure, fear and panic because of their obsessors' suffocated behaviors. As we have already mentioned in the previous chapter, obsessors who believe that they possess their targets often react aggressively and violently when they are rejected. Accordingly, while the uncontrollable behavior starts to appear, targets try to break up any contact with their obsessive lovers as a key to end the relationship.

1. Targets' Relationships with their Obsessive Lovers in John Fowles' and Caroline Kepnes' Novels

Targets' reactions towards their obsessive lovers are different. Forward claims that we can distinguish different ways of reactions made by targets either from the beginning of the relationship or at its end. Almost all targets of obsessive lovers get at a certain moment to recognize their desperate situation. This makes them take the decision of rejecting all sorts of interaction with their obsessors even though they initially share passion, love and feelings with them.

John Fowles exposes his novel in a vivid manner so that the reader may understand the reason behind Miranda's decisive refusal from the very beginning. It is comprehensive that Miranda rejects Clegg since his obsession seems to be a shock for her. Clegg claims: "She didn't make a sound, she seemed so surprised."⁶⁷ It is clear that Miranda's thoughts are totally

messed face to Clegg's oppressive behavior, as she asserts: "Deep down I get more and more frightened."⁶⁸ Miranda's statement shows her state of being scared about all what is happening, thus, leaving is the only solution she needs.

In her book, Forward speaks about targets who have difficulties in ending the relationship with their obsessors because of their feelings of "compassion, guilt and sexual desire."⁶⁹ Actually, this kind of targets find complications when they come to break up with their obsessors. When we analyze John Fowles's *The Collector*, one can observe that Miranda has sometimes a troubled feeling between leaving Clegg and the feeling of sympathy towards him.

Miranda says: "He will suffer when I am gone. There will be nothing left. He'll be alone with all his sex neurosis and his class neurosis and his emptiness. He's asked for it. I'm not really sorry. But I'm not absolutely unsorry."⁷⁰ Hurting someone who gives you love and care makes you feel guilty and responsible for all the pain he feels. This quotation shows that Miranda starts to have some empathy and guilt over Clegg. She is aware that leaving would affect him negatively.

Moreover, it is hurtful to be the cause of the other's pain. John Fowles depicts Miranda's pain, and her feeling of being cruel towards Clegg. In her statement "It's difficult, though. When I'm being beastly to him, he has such a way of looking sorry for himself that I begin to hate myself."⁷¹ Miranda's words prove well that she feels so guilty for her terrible acts. She blames herself for being malicious with him and the cause of his suffering. Miranda feels so responsible for Clegg's situation.

Another example that shows the targets' sympathy and pity for their obsessive lovers is Miranda's declaration: "I feel a responsibility towards him that I don't really understand. I so often hate him, I think I ought to forever hate him. Yet, I don't always. My pity wins, and I do want to help him."⁷² Miranda's strong emotions of guilt and empathy overcome her. It was

what urged the feeling of responsibility for him. She feels that it is her duty to help him for eliminating the pain he feels.

Many targets can easily decide to break up with their obsessors when the relationship becomes unhealthy. They are not able to continue with them since the aggressive behavior plunges them into enormous oppression what prevents them from feeling free, whereas some targets often find themselves unable to break up with their obsessors because of their adherence to them. The 'sexual desire' represents another obstacle that interrupts most targets when deciding to break up with their obsessors.

Considering John Fowles's work, one can distinguish that Miranda's thoughts and behaviors show that she has no desire for Clegg as long as she is only trying to seduce him in order to find a way to escape. She claims:

I thought out all the sex facts... get me into bed if he wants. Play with me if he wants. But not the final thing. I'm going to tell him it's my time of the month, if he tries to go too far. But I think he'll be so shocked that I shall be able to make him do what I want. I mean, I'm going to do all the seducing. I know it would be a terrible risk.⁷³

The above quotation makes it clear that Miranda often sympathizes with her obsessor but as far as sexual desire is concerned. It is apparent that she is just trying to seduce him so as to facilitate the process of escaping.

Contrary to what we have said about Miranda in John Fowles's novel, Caroline Kepnes, on the other hand, shows that before discovering Joe's terrible acts, Beck appreciates Joe's attention and care. We can notice that from the very beginning of the novel, Beck shares Joe's admiration and passion that lead her to initiate a relationship with him. In Joe's statement "You take your bag of books and don't break eye contact because you want me to see you seeing me...We're laughing and you wanted to know my name as much I wanted to know yours"⁷⁴. One can notice that Beck is attracted by Joe from their first meeting. Joe explains

how Beck tries to seduce him the fact that increases his longing and desire for more attention and affection.

Within the same context, Beck's need to someone who understands her feelings, and with whom she can share her passion, leads her to cling more to Joe despite of his obsession. Susan Forward claims that in the beginning of the relationship "we fell like we're walking on air. Flowers smell more fragrant, music sounds more beautiful, the sky seems bluer, our pulse quickens, our mood soars."⁷⁵ However, in the unhealthy relationship, it does not take long when events start to change and transfer into an irresistible situation. Joe claims: "you [Beck] love me more than anything and you tell me I'm smarter than the guys in your grad program and the guys you knew in college."⁷⁶ For Beck, Joe is a source of care and passion, he may provide her with beautiful feelings that she cannot find in other men.

Empathy is a basic element of the human nature, it affects greatly human's psyche.⁷⁷ Similarly to Miranda in John Fowles's novel, Beck also faces some difficulties about leaving Joe because of her feelings of empathy and compassion. In her conversation with Dr. Nicky, Beck tells him: "I'm trying to end things with Joe, but he has so little going for him and I'm definitively the best thing that ever happened to him and it's hard."⁷⁸ Her declaration to Dr. Nicky shows that breaking up with Joe is not an easy task for her. Her empathy prevents her from making such a decision, what leads her to a constant fight with herself. She is confused whether to carry on the relation with Joe in order not to despair him or end the relationship in which she is no longer at ease.

Contrary to Miranda, Beck seems to be attached sexually to Joe. Her strong sexual pleasure often prevents her from leaving despite the difficulties that faced them. In this quotation "I remember the last month around this time, you got violent and screamed at me...the next day you got your period and you kissed me on the cheek."⁷⁹ Joe explains the

fact that Beck is restricted by her strong desire what leads her to be confused and chaotic about her need of breaking up or going on despite Joe's obsessive behavior.

Caroline Kepnes points out Beck's sexual desire and attachment to Joe, though she tries to control herself, which is well evident in Joe's words "You don't want to do it again."⁸⁰ She is overcome by her sexual passion. He says:

I told you to take your skirt off and you obeyed (I am the boss) and you weren't wearing any panties and I told you to touch yourself and you did and you willed the other Beck to shut the fuck up. You wanted the music on and so I left it alone (I am the boss and I am allowed to please you on occasion)... you watched me smiling one second, intent and ready the next. I told you to beg for it and you begged me to come in there... you took me in your hands and in your mouth and kept looking up at me.⁸¹

Actually, these quotations reveal how Beck is completely blinded by Joe to the point of obeying each order he gives. As a matter of fact, sexual desire can sometimes be an obstacle to some people to break up with their obsessive lovers.

Throughout the analysis of the two novels, we deduce that targets may have different reactions towards their obsessors but they all agree on the fact that this unhealthy relationship must eventually come to an end. There are two main methods that targets can use to end the relation with their lovers. Being 'assertive and honest' in their words and actions is almost used by the majority of targets. Using the 'double message', being dishonest and contradicting words with actions is another option to expose the desire of breaking up with obsessors. The two methods can be used interchangeably. This means that each target uses first the method she believes more suitable and can bring the desired solution which is to convince the obsessive lover of the uselessness of the relation and the necessity of ending it.

2. The Methods Adopted by Targets to Break up with an Obsessive Lover:

It is necessary in any relationship that the two parts agree to end it. However, when it concerns an obsessive lover, it becomes so hard to do so. Targets always find it difficult to get away from their obsessors, the fact that pushes them to seek for solutions to express their true feelings for them and save themselves from the unhealthy relationship that threatens their lives.

In this part, we shall discuss the attempts made by the targets in Fowles' *The Collector* and Kepnes' *You* to free themselves from their obsessors. This will be done by making reference to Susan Forward's theory of obsession. Miranda and Beck as all other targets have suffered from the excessive love of their obsessors. They finally found themselves fighting to get free from these restrictions that caused them a lot of pain. Thus, they try whatever action they think necessary to break up with their obsessors and put an end to their obsession

A. Miranda and Beck as Assertive Targets

When targets of an obsessive love feel the need to end their relationship with their obsessors, most of them resort to different steps to achieve this goal. Being assertive and expressing your wants and needs "frankly, honestly, and directly"⁸² is generally the most used way by the majority of targets. They always try to communicate their wants clearly and act assertively to convince their obsessors of accepting their decision. Being honest is the best way to make things clear, otherwise things become worse than ever.⁸³ Fowles and Kepnes' novels illustrate clearly the reaction of the targets Miranda and Beck and the way they handle the issue of obsession.

1) Using Assertive Statements

Throughout our study of *The Collector*, Miranda as the target of Clegg's obsession has been shocked by what he dares to do in order to own her. Consequently, she decides to insist on him to accept her request without becoming 'belligerent'. Miranda is obliged to be sincere in her words to transfer her decision to Clegg. When she realizes about Clegg's obsession and the purpose of his actions, the only solution she thought about is to tell him that the relationship he looks for is something undesirable and unwanted.

Miranda's words "do you think you'll make me love you by keeping me prisoner?"⁸⁴ show her decisive decision of breaking up with him. In fact, she is unable to bear the consequences of Clegg's obsession. Her fear and panic of what is coming next lead her to struggle with someone who does not want to accept.

Making 'assertive statements' is done by targets repeatedly in order to strengthen their wants and attract their obsessor's attention. Even if Miranda tries often to persuade Clegg to let her go, he still prevents her to do that. As a target of an obsessive lover, she has to be assertive in her words with her obsessor to make limits to his suffocated behavior. In the following quotation, Miranda's assertive statements are cruel hoping that she would eventually reap something good. She states: "I just want to be set free."⁸⁵ These words mean that Miranda does not want to see Clegg anymore. For her, the only thing she wants is freeing herself and making an end for his obsession.

Targets often try to touch the sensitive side of their obsessor believing that by doing such an action, they will certainly let them go. Miranda often accuses Clegg and insults him, she claims: "you're not a human being."⁸⁶ and "I hate you, I hate you."⁸⁷ For Miranda, these words could be the reason to urge Clegg's acceptance. She supposes that being assertive and hurting him, he will certainly accept to free her. In Miranda's mind, these cruel words will have a great impact on Clegg's mind and even affect widely his inner side.

During her imprisonment, Miranda tries most of the time to be rude and offensive with Clegg. Her aim is to make it clear that whatever he does, he can never make her change her mind. This conversation clearly confirms it:

“How long shall I be here?”

I don’t know, I said, it depends.

“On what?”

I didn’t say anything. I couldn’t

“On my falling in love with you?”

It was like nagging.

“Because if it does, I shall be here until I die.”

I didn’t answer that.

“Go away,” she said. “Go away and think it over.”⁸⁸

We understand that Miranda wants Clegg to realize that keeping her as a prisoner is not going to change things as she is never going to love him as long as she is alive.

Targets may use different statements to express their need to breaking up with their obsessors. These statements are generally brutal and affect greatly obsessors. It is necessary that targets give strict orders to enforce their definitive decision. Clegg reveals Miranda’s state “She stood up and walked towards me saying get out, get out, get out. It was terrible. She looked really mad.”⁸⁹ She is forced to be severe in her words to avoid any defensive action by Clegg.

Similarly to what has been said about Miranda, Beck, the target of Joe’s obsessive love in Caroline Kepnes’s *You* also feels pressure from his excessive behavior. Joe does not respect Beck’s decision since he believes that he knows her feelings more than she does. Consequently, she finds out that she has to take the decision of being assertive to persuade him.

After all the oppression that Beck has received from Joe because of rejecting him, she is finally starting to make decisive statement to prove her decision. As many other targets she realizes that it is necessary to reach a kind of compromise with Joe hoping that she may persuade him. Beck keeps insisting to push him respect her choice. She says: “I would never go to the police, Joe. You let me out of here, and I’m gone. Forever.”⁹⁰ In this statement, Beck tries assertively to express her true feelings and needs in order to win Joe’s sympathy and make him accept that the relationship is over. Moreover, she promises him that she will totally tolerate his oppressive behaviors and forget about all his violent actions in case he lets her go.

Within the same context, Beck is still making assertive statements with Joe since he does not want to accept the idea of breaking up. She uses the expression “I’m leaving”⁹¹ as a decisive decision that she takes regardless of Joe’s consideration. Beck asserts that the only thing she wants is to be freed before things become complicated. By using this assertive statement, Beck attempts to express her strong desire of breaking up with Joe. Moreover, she tries to make things clear for him aiming that he will respect her choice. Beck believes that it is necessary to be direct and clear in her statements to persuade Joe that breaking up is the only thing she needs.

It is normal, for any target of an obsessive lover to be assertive and cruel in his statements when the obsessor keeps refusing his decision. Despite Beck’s rejection, Joe still believes that her desire of breaking up is going to change through time. However, Beck decides to reinforce her statements by using hurting words to show her abstinence. She asserts: “You’re crazy. You’re crazy.”⁹² And “You’re a sicko.”⁹³ Beck uses cruel and harsh words to urge Joe take things seriously. However, even if these words are hurting and painful, they do not change Joe’s emotions towards Beck.

Targets generally find difficulties to break up with their obsessive lovers since they are, according to Susan Forward, “infuriatingly deaf to even the most articulate, emphatic,

unambiguous, and decisive statements.”⁹⁴ That is to say, it is not easy for targets to communicate their desire while obsessors often ignore them. For instance, Kepnes in her novel, introduces a sample of the target’s suffering in persuading his/ her obsessor to accept his decision. Beck’s words “Are you deaf, Joe?”⁹⁵ show Joe’s denial of her assertive and cruel statements. For Joe, it is necessary to ignore Beck’s words as a way to make her bored of repeating and expressing each time her desire to leave. Consequently, he believes that she will certainly change her mind. As these statements do not affect Joe, Beck has to take whatever action is necessary to save herself from this destructive relationship.

2) Taking Assertive Actions

Being assertive and frank is generally for the purpose of making things clear. However, the targets’ statements do not often end successfully. As a result, they move to take any ‘assertive action’ to insist on their decision. Despite Miranda’s hurting messages to convince Clegg to let her leave, he keeps ignoring her words just to keep her by his side. Consequently, she tries to escape several times as another step to reinforce her decision. Miranda declares: “I tried to escape. I thought about it all night.”⁹⁶ Each time Miranda tries to break up with Clegg it does not work. So, it is necessary to be assertive in her actions to make things seem more serious.

Moreover, the repetitive assertive actions almost have a purpose. Miranda’s assertive actions come to reinforce her decision. For instance, in Miranda’s words “Get out of the way, I’m going to leave”⁹⁷ shows her assertive decision towards Clegg’s obsession. Other assertive statements that refer to Miranda’s strong need of breaking up with Clegg can be found in the novel. They demonstrate the goal of behind her behavior.

According to Susan Forward, assertive actions frequently harm the targets’ lives and cause them problems. We can understand that targets decide to act even if they eventually hurt themselves since they believe it can be a successful method for them. Miranda tries

several times to persuade Clegg to give up and accept her decision. Nonetheless, while she realizes that he is determined to imprison her forever, she tries to escape as soon as she finds an occasion to do that despite the awful reaction and terrible treatment she gets each time she attempts to escape.

From the following quotation, we can see how Miranda tries to mislead Clegg by asking him for help. She pretends that the far back leg of her bed needs reparation. As he comes to help, she seizes the occasion to escape. Clegg says:

I went to help her hold it and suddenly she gave me a heavy push, just as I was off balance, and ran past me. She was at the steps and up them like lightening. I had allowed for it, there was a safety hook holding the door back open and a wedge she was trying to kick away when I came after her, well, she turned and ran, screaming help, help, and up the steps to the outer door, which was of course locked. She pulled at it and banged it and went screaming on but I got her then.⁹⁸

It is clear that Miranda does not miss any opportunity albeit this will cost her a lot. Clegg is confronted to the necessity of doing something to prevent her even if he loves her. He says: “I hated doing it, but action was necessary.”⁹⁹

Another opportunity has been seized by Miranda where she reaches the ultimate point of violence as a last resort, she argues:

I wasn't nervous, I picked the axe up very nearly, I didn't scrape the blade and it was the blunt end. But then... it was like waking up out of a bad dream. I had to hit him and I couldn't but I had to. Then he began to straighten up (all this happened in a flash, really) and I did hit him. But he was turning and I didn't hit straight. Or hard enough. I mean, I lashed out in a panic in the last moment. He fell sideways, but I knew he wasn't knocked out, he still kept hold me. I hit him again, but he had his arm up, at the same time he kicked out and knocked off my feet. It was too horrible. Panting, straining, like animals. Then suddenly I knew it was –I don't know. Undignified. It sound absurd, but that was it. Like a statue lying on its side.

Like a fat woman trying to get up off the grass. We got up, he pushed me roughly towards the door, keeping a tight hold of me.¹⁰⁰

This quotation demonstrates well Miranda's strong need to end her relationship with Clegg. For her, it is necessary to commit such a dangerous act to reach her desire. Even if there is a strong possibility that this would cost her life, she is ready to venture as long as succeeding is a probable outcome.

Miranda goes further when deciding to prevent herself from eating. She states: "I shan't eat until you let me go"¹⁰¹ reveals the fact that things start to be irresistible. As a reaction to Clegg's suffocated behavior, she begins to make risks aiming that she will win her struggle. Even if such an action is not easy for Miranda and can destruct her physically as well as morally, she decides to stop eating to get some sympathy from Clegg and let her leave.

Almost all targets of obsessive love neglect and ignore their obsessors to enforce their decision and show their refusal to them. Nevertheless, if this method does not lead to the desired solution, they often resort to make any action they find necessary. In her novel *You*, Kepnes illustrates well Beck's reaction towards Joe's obsession and demonstrates her repeated statements and actions to end her relationship with him.

Almost all assertive actions are used to reinforce the target's decision. Actually, they prove well the target's decisive choice that makes the obsessive lover realizes the seriousness of the situation. Joe's words show Beck's assertive actions, he claims: "and then you made plans to go out with Lynn and Chana [Beck's friends] instead of seeing me."¹⁰² Beck's refusal to meet Joe and going to meet her friends instead is a sign of her breaking up with Joe.

As Miranda did with Clegg, Beck also tries to escape when the excessive behavior of Joe becomes a threat for her. In this expression where Joe explains Beck's assertive actions, we may perceive how she is fighting to leave him "You try to bite me but you can't and you try to kick me but you can't and you try to claw me but your wrists are locked in my

hands...You spit at my face.”¹⁰³ Such actions are not easy for targets while it can provoke dangerous issues to their lives, but sometimes they have to take risks to achieve their purpose.

Beck is ready to make any dangerous act in order to escape and leave Joe. Even if she knows that such an act is going to cost her dearly, but it is still the only way to save herself from Joe’s obsession. The following quotation demonstrates Beck’s rage and her defensive attempt in the face of the difficult situation she finds herself in: “You do not run away; you run at me...You scratch me. I could kill you and you know it.”¹⁰⁴ At this point, Beck realizes that she has to sacrifice to win this struggle. She knows that it is not easy to get involved with a psychotic man who can do any unconscious act to prevent her from leaving. Whether she stays with him or runs away, she knows that her life is in danger so she has to make the assertive action to prove her decision.

Usually, assertive statements and actions are the main solutions that the target of an obsessive love uses to break up with his obsessor. These actions generally appear when this excessive love is unwanted or even when a psychotic person imposes his oppressive behavior on his target and prevents him from leaving. If these methods do not lead to the desired outcome, it is up to the target to find another successful way to get out of this toxic relationship. Thus, most targets have recourse to other methods such as using ‘double messages’.

B. Miranda and Beck’s Shift to the Use of Double Messages

Considering what we have said before, targets of obsessive lovers may do whatever in their power to escape, including aggressive deeds. However, the latter are most of the time the reason behind the failure of all attempts since they only increase the obsessors’s firmness and rage towards the target. Thus, targets find themselves struck in an inevitable prison because obsessive lovers are fully aware of all their intentions and actions as they are the dominant

side in the relationship. Thus, in order that targets achieve their goal which is freeing themselves, they resort to another way which is called by Susan Forward 'Double Messages'.

The use of 'double messages' is considered as the only way left for targets to survive. It is namely the incompatibility of their words with their actions. Targets try to manipulate their obsessors' feelings through giving false promises or optimistic expressions to make them think that the relationship is still going on, hoping to influence them and stimulate their sense of humanity and compassion. In fact, the most important for targets is making their obsessors realize the seriousness of what they are doing or, at least, distract them to find a chance to escape.

Using the 'double messages' is well apparent in John Fowles's and Caroline Kepnes's works. Miranda and Beck are finally convinced that there is no way to get rid of their obsessive lovers, except pretending to accept their relationship and claiming sincere feelings towards them. In the second part of his book, John Fowles tries to show Miranda's reaction against Clegg's acts. This part concerns the diary she has written while being imprisoned in the cellar. Fowles tries to introduce the psychological state of Miranda from her own perspective. According to Susan Forward's theory, targets of obsessive lovers make several attempts to break up with their obsessors, but often fail. Therefore, they resort to use 'double messages' to rescue themselves.

Miranda finds out that her violent attempts to escape and rude expressions which declare her rejection to Clegg's desire do not provide her with the aiming result. Thus, she turns out to change her attitudes and behavior towards him by acting in a vicious way "I've got take up a new attitude with him."¹⁰⁵ Miranda claims: "I've come to a series of decision. Thoughts. Violence and force are wrong. If I use violence I descend to his level. It means that I have no real belief in the power of reason, and sympathy and humanity."¹⁰⁶. This implies

that Miranda decides after assessing her situation that she has to rely on ‘reason’ than ‘violence’.

Miranda states: “therefore with generosity (give myself) and gentleness (I kiss my beast) and no-shame (I do what I do of my own free) and forgiveness (he can’t help himself). Even a baby. His baby. Anything for freedom.”¹⁰⁷ This quotation shows that Miranda is ready to do whatever she considers useful to get rid of Clegg. She adds to say that: “the more I think about it [to escape] the more I feel sure that this is the way.”¹⁰⁸ Regarding these words, it is clear that Miranda thinks that being witty, kind and imposter at the same time is the ideal way to escape. These statements support the idea that targets can do all sorts of attempts to free themselves regardless of the adopted ways.

Miranda realizes that everything Clegg has done is of her fault because all her efforts and content decisions to break up lead him to persist more on the idea of never letting her go. Therefore, she resorts to make statements and actions that totally contradict with her real intention by using different ways. For instance, she moves to invent a fairy story in which the events are similar to their actual situation. She asserts: “So I took his arm and made him sit down again, and I said, I’m going to tell you a fairy story.”¹⁰⁹ Miranda tells about a monster who captures a princess and imprisons her. Through this story, Miranda reveals the suffering of this princess and how the monster finally regrets what he has done and sets her free. Miranda tells him that this act allowed them to leave happier. Through this story, Miranda’s intention is to influence Clegg and make him recognize and believe that letting her go is the best decision for both of them.

When targets try to break up with their obsessive lovers, they often use ‘double messages’ as a way to act cleverly but in a firm way to achieve their goal. This may drive the obsessors to think that their relationship is still going on or believe that their targets will get back to them. As a way of getting rid of obsessors, targets may use ambiguous statements

where words contradict the actions. For instance, Miranda tries to behave rationally and calmly to persuade Clegg to trust her. She states:

I've given up too soon with Caliban [Clegg]. I've got to take up a new attitude with him. The prisoner-warder idea was silly. I won't spit at him anymore. I'll be silent when he irritates me. I'll treat him as someone who needs all my sympathy and understanding. I'll go on trying to teach him things about art. Other things.¹¹⁰

What Miranda says shows that she has decided to alter her way of conduct with Clegg and become another person.

Within the same context, Miranda is still making attempts to escape and leave Clegg by manipulating his feelings with her fake words and behavior. In her statement: "I've smiled at him, I've dutifully tried to look as if I like everything about him. He certainly hasn't given any sign of having noticed it. But he won't know what's hit him tomorrow."¹¹¹ Miranda asserts that her real intention behind her behavior is to get rid of Clegg. She resorts to pretend love and sympathy to affect him and gain his confidence. She feels that she must be nice with him to find a way to be freed.

Targets of obsessive lovers often resort to many ways to eliminate the negative feelings caused by their obsessors. Miranda pretends to be sick as a suitable way to get rid of Clegg. She asserts: "Another escape...I tried the appendicitis trick. I thought of it weeks ago. I've always thought of it as a sort of last resort."¹¹² Miranda's statement shows her use of the 'double messages' when she pretends illness whereas she is actually quite good. For her, being dishonest is the only solution that can provide her with the satisfactory result she is aiming for.

In addition to what has been mentioned, targets do not give up despite the difficulties they face. In this context, Miranda is unable to accept the state of being imprisoned, the fact that pushes her to resort to an alternative option that seems to her the suitable way to get

released. She says: “I’ve come to a tremendous decision today. I’ve imagined being in bed with him. It’s useless just kissing him. I’ve got to give him such a tremendous shock that he’ll have to release me. Because you can’t very well imprison someone who’s given herself to you.”¹¹³ Miranda’s strong desire to end this relationship leads her to sacrifice even her principles, through committing actions that would change her fate. She presumes that since it is evident that the real reason behind her imprisonment is seeking ‘sex’, she is going to offer herself to Clegg. She is convinced that it is unreasonable to imprison someone who gives you everything you want and thus she will be allowed to leave.

Targets’ resort to ‘double messages’ as a way to get rid of their obsessive lovers. Forward argues that: “they send out a series of confusing messages, which only succeed in fanning the flames of their lover’s obsessive behaviors.”¹¹⁴ Targets think that being dishonest and manipulating their obsessors’ feelings may provide them with chances of breaking up with them. However, this would only succeed in inciting the excessive behavior of their obsessors. In this sense, despite Miranda’s intelligent attempts to escape, Clegg still insists on keeping her with him.

In fact, being dishonest is the biggest mistake she has done since losing Miranda is Clegg’s biggest fear. For instance, Miranda’s kindness with Clegg contradicts with her real intention what urges his extreme anger. Miranda’s repetitive acts provoke Clegg’s violent behavior. She asserts “I had to kill him or he would kill me... he pushed me roughly towards the door, keeping a tight hold of me.”¹¹⁵ This statement reveals how obsessors can become more aggressive and oppressive when discovering their target’s manipulation.

The use of the ‘Double Messages’ is also well apparent in Caroline Kepnes’s *You*. Since Beck is a victim of an obsessive lover, she also resorts to behave in a confusing way to get rid of her obsessor Joe. However, all her attempts do not succeed, this is what pushes her to be dishonest and make false and various pretences about accepting to be in a relationship with

Joe. Beck says: “I’m not crazy... I’m sorry... I promise... when I get nasty like that, it’s like I’m standing outside of myself and I know I’m being terrible and irrational but there’s nothing I can do about it. I have serious PMS issues sometimes.”¹¹⁶ In this statement, Beck tries to get Joe’s empathy to let her go, she provides him with convincing statements to win his confidence but Joe does not believe her whatever she says.

Within the same context, Beck does not give up with the idea of escaping as she is still trying to persuade Joe even if she knows that her words do not affect him. After concluding that being violent and rude is useless, Beck pleads Joe to discuss their actual situation saying “I’m sorry...Joe we can talk about this.”¹¹⁷ This shows her kind way to gain his sympathy again. As she believes that by doing that, she can convince Joe to respect her desire. However, Beck’s words are totally different from her reaction as the latter shows the opposite of what she has said before. In fact, just after pretending submissiveness, she makes another attempt to escape. This makes Joe cling to the fact that he will never let her go.

Similarly to what has already been said about Miranda, Beck also resorts to feign sickness to avoid any contact with Joe. For Beck, it is necessary to almost eliminate any contact with Joe. Each time he asks her to meet him, she claims: “I’m still sick. I sleep.”¹¹⁸ These words reveal Beck’s position towards Joe and how she starts trying to keep him away. In fact, Beck is convinced that this method gives her the opportunity to get rid of Joe. As most targets of obsessive lovers, she thinks that distracting herself from Joe will make him understand her will to break up with him

After all, the unsuccessful attempts made by Beck, she decides to change her attitudes towards Joe as she cannot accept the fact of being imprisoned. Her rejection to Joe’s oppressive behavior makes her think of the necessity of rescuing herself. Beck says to Joe: “I’m always telling you how smart you are, how much smarter you are than everyone I know. You’re amazing and you’re funny and smart and real.”¹¹⁹ Beck says things that she never

means for the reason of controlling his emotions. She believes that providing him with such expressions may help to reach her desire.

Targets of obsessive lovers take many actions to face their situation and remain safe. They try to distance themselves from their obsessors through various ways. Here, Beck thinks that she is able to reach her purpose through positive psychological manipulations. For instance, she tries to influence and control Joe's feeling, as it is obviously included in this statement: "Listen to me Joe [she presses her hands into Joe's hands in a manner that is entirely devoid of sex, of passion] I don't care about what you did to Benji or Peach. I get it. Benji really did have a drug problem. And Peach really did have issues."¹²⁰ Beck pretends to acknowledge the fact that all what Joe did is for her benefits. Beck uses words that do neither go with her inner wants and needs nor with her behavior and actions, hoping that she would reap a positive result.

Beck makes another attempt and goes further trying to control the psychology of her obsessive lover. This is by letting herself be the scapegoat and the one to be blamed for Joe's deeds. She tells him: "Then you know I would never turn you in, Joe. I'm the connector in all this. I'm the toxic one I know this mess is my fault."¹²¹ While saying this, Beck 'squishes' her 'toes' into Joe's 'pants'. This indicates her trial to influence and seduce him.

The 'double messages' consist on lying on the obsessors and controlling their feelings and thoughts expecting to disrupt them. Their purpose is to sneak away for their obsessors. Nevertheless, this way does not lead targets to any successful outcome, except increasing their obsessors' oppressive behaviors. Therefore, it seems that all Beck's efforts trying to seduce and affect Joe to free her do not bring her any benefit but rather pushes him to become more adhere to the idea of possessing her. Consequently, disobeying Beck when she insists on Joe to have a discussion implies his awareness of her real intention. Joe claims: "unfortunately,

you were lying and kick once more, trying to escape.”¹²² Joe’s rage comes to its high level what makes him behave unconsciously and aggressively.

Through our analysis, we have seen how both obsessive targets namely Miranda and Beck make all attempts and use different methods to convince their obsessor to free them. Both targets behave aggressively and state their needs openly but then resort to using double messages to delude their obsessor as an alternative way. However, the two targets fail and get killed during their attempts to escape.

Endnotes:

⁶⁷ Fowles, *The Collector* (United States, Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 24.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 123.

⁶⁹ Susan Forward and Graig Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go* (New York: Bantam Books, 2002), 27.

⁷⁰ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 208-209

⁷¹ Ibid, 246.

⁷² Ibid, 229.

⁷³ Ibid, 255.

⁷⁴ Caroline Kepnes, *You* (United States: Atria / Emily Bestler Books, 2014), 5.

⁷⁵ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love When it hurts too much to Let Go*. 2002. 19.

⁷⁶ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 42.

⁷⁷ Jean Decety and Jason M. Cowell, "The Complex relation Between Morality and Empathy," (University of Chicago, 2015), 337.

⁷⁸ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 241.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 232.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 152.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love When it hurts too much to Let Go*. 2002. 136.

⁸³ Danielle Anne, "How to Successfully Break Up with an Obsessive Lover," accessed on January 26th, 2022. <https://www.lovepanky.com/love-couch/broken-heart/how-to-successfully-break-up-with-an-obsessive-lover>

⁸⁴ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 35.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 33.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 116.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 46.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 43.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 95.

- ⁹⁰ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 260
- ⁹¹ Ibid, 232.
- ⁹² Ibid.
- ⁹³ Ibid, 234.
- ⁹⁴ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love When it hurts too much to Let Go*. 2002. 138-139.
- ⁹⁵ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 232.
- ⁹⁶ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 131.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid, 28.
- ⁹⁸ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 43.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid, 44.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 244.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid, 109.
- ¹⁰² Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 153.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid, 262.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 257.
- ¹⁰⁵ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1996. 245.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 256.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 199.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid, 245.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid, 258.
- ¹¹² Ibid, 216.
- ¹¹³ Ibid, 255.
- ¹¹⁴ Forward and Buck, *Obsessive Love: When it hurts too much to Let Go*, 2002. 132-133.
- ¹¹⁵ Fowles, *The Collector*, 1963. 244.
- ¹¹⁶ Kepnes, *You*, 2014. 232.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid, 235.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 97.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 241.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 260.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid, 235.

V. Conclusion:

This work has dealt with obsessive love as a dominant theme in John Fowles's *The Collector* (1963) and Caroline Kepnes's *You* (2014) from the psychological perspective. Our main concern is the portrayal of the issue of 'obsessive love' in the two post modernist literary works. The two selected works have been studied in the light of Susan Forward and Graig Buck's theory of Obsession, relying on their book entitled *Obsessive Love: When it Hurts too Much to Let Go* (2002). Our research paper reveals that both authors tackle the same theme in their novels and center their interest on the psychological state of their characters.

Our work draws out some conclusions about the two novels which prove greatly that the two main characters embody the main characteristics of an obsessive love and that the females, regarded as targets, suffer because of this obsession and fight to overcome it. In the first chapter, we have analyzed some of obsessive lovers' characteristics which are involved in the previous theory including: idealized lover, stalking, obsessive jealousy, rejection, rage and revenge. Actually, Fowles's and Kepnes's novels depict the struggle of their obsessive lovers Clegg and Joe to possess their targets Miranda and Beck. Analyzing the two novels allowed us to dig into the obsessors' unconsciousness that urged their excessive behavior.

In the second chapter, we have discussed the obstacles experienced by the two targets and their different reactions to face their obsessors' suffocated behavior. This study leads us to point out the fact that contrary to other women who face no difficulties when deciding to end a love relationship, targets of obsessive lovers find it difficult if not impossible to end these destructive relations. Thus, they resort to use some techniques like relying on double messages or simply being assertive to make things clear to their obsessors.

To conclude, the two mentioned works are appropriate to be examined and studied together in the light of a psychological perspective by focusing on the concept of obsessive

love and its main characteristics. We hope that this research work would be helpful for better understanding of the affinities of the two works in relation to the previous concept. Since our comparative study is limited and the scope of our research cannot deal with all the subjects related to the works of John Fowles and Caroline Kepnes, we believe that other studies and researches can be carried to explore other issues in both works from new perspectives including feminism and gender issues.

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