

JOHN FOWLES'IN *THE COLLECTOR* ADLI ESERİNDE FEMİNİST YAKLAŞIM IŞIĞINDA NEZAKET VE GÜÇ DİNAMİKLERİNİ KEŞFETMEK

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Özet

Bu çalışma, John Fowles'in *The Collector* adlı romanındaki nezaket temasını feminist bir bakış açısıyla incelemektedir. Hikâye, erkek karakter Frederick Clegg ile tutsağı Miranda Grey arasındaki karmaşık güç ve kontrol dinamiklerine odaklanmaktadır. Nezaket, her iki karakterin de içinde olduğu altta yatan toplumsal normları ve cinsiyet rollerini ortaya çıkaran kritik bir mekanizma olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Clegg'in nezaketi, şiddet içeren eylemleriyle keskin bir tezat oluşturarak toplumsal beklentiler ile kişisel ahlak arasındaki uyumsuzluğu vurgulamaktadır. Bu arada Miranda'nın, Clegg'in davranışlarına verdiği tepkiler, ataerkil yapılar içinde kadınlara uygulanan kısıtlamaları yansıtmaktadır. Bu çalışma, nezaket ve gücün etkileşimini analiz ederek, romanın toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkileri ve insan etkileşimlerindeki kontrolün sinsi doğası hakkındaki yorumunu vurgulamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Feminist edebiyat, toplumsal cinsiyet dinamikleri, nezaket, ataerkil yapılar, insan etkileşimleri

EXPLORING POLITENESS AND POWER DYNAMICS IN JOHN FOWLES' *THE COLLECTOR* IN THE LIGHT OF FEMİNİST APPROACH

Abstract

This study examines the theme of kindness in John Fowles' novel *The Collector*. The story centres on the relationship between Frederick Clegg, a complex male protagonist and Miranda Grey, his victim. Here politeness is emphasized, revealing the hidden aspects of social structure and the gendering of characters. Social politeness, exemplified in Clegg's framework, is not the same as violence within, and it exposes the gap between what people are expected to do in a social setting and what they actually do. On the other hand, the way Miranda reacts to Clegg's acts of politeness depicts how women are expected to behave and feel under patriarchal conditions. By focusing on the nuances of power and control, the study addresses issues of power dynamics in the interplay between men and women, which is especially prominent in the narrative.

Key words: Feminist literature, gender dynamics, politeness, patriarchal structures, human interactions

1. INTRODUCTION

John Fowles' novel explores issues of control, power, and human interaction through an engrossing story. Among the many levels the author explores as an important prism through which to examine the interactions and actions of the characters, the idea of kindness stands out. *The Collector* (2004) by John Fowles appears at first to be the tale of a deranged guy named Frederick Clegg who develops an obsession with an art student Miranda Grey. Following his pool winnings and subsequent windfall, Clegg purchases a remote home, kidnaps Miranda, and confines her to his specially designed cellar, which doubles as a cell whose meaning is taken from the word "room" (Macháňová, 2022, p. 14). After several unsuccessful attempts to flee, Miranda catches a cold that eventually develops into pneumonia. Clegg continues poisoning her with unuseful medication and allows her to slowly die in agony because he is unwilling to seek the right medical aid for her because doing so will expose him. According to Fredman (2006, p. 8), "His idea of gender roles is quite conservative, with the man as the superior dominant partner and the woman as the caring person who looks after the home and the family." As Mansoor (2018, p. 168) states, "Politeness principle suggests that one has to 'maximize the expression of polite beliefs, minimize the expression of impolite beliefs'. He divides them into six maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, sympathy."

The elements of politeness appear in *The Collector* in a variety of ways, reflecting power dynamics and society expectations. "The two characters are involved in a series of dialogues, honest and manipulative, soft and aggressive" (Držajić, 2020, p. 199). Language and speech acts are two important components; characters' use of language and speech acts frequently conveys politeness. "In every social interaction, politeness can be useful in decreasing potential threats. That is, speakers, trying to weaken face-threatening acts" (Mansoor, 2018, p. 175). For instance, Miranda shows that she affords to remain within socially acceptable limits even when she comes off as kind but cold to Clegg by trying to absorb his advances. Characters abide by and exhibit social standards and manners out of courtesy. Yet if she is outside Miranda's circle and privately expresses a sense of unease, her primary affection for Clegg seems to be the norm in terms of politeness. The central idea of this article is a reflection on the novel through the prism of feminist criticism concerning the language of politeness particularly its power relations and gender. This study aims to narrow down gender-based expectations and demographics through the aspects of courtesy described in the book, and examine their interactions at the micro level in response to their needs. This can assist in understanding better the themes of the novel. It is necessary to consider why it is essential to understand the tenets of politeness as a social construction and how it applies to both men and women in Fowles' writings within a feminist context.

1.1 Politeness and Power Dynamics

At the onset, the compassion that main character reveals in extending courtesy to the female character conceals his inner design of possession and control. These manners in which gender stereotypes influence politeness. Because women are expected to preserve kindness and avoid disagreement, Miranda, a woman, feels pressured to obey Clegg's approaches. "I got her down quite easily; we did have a bit of a struggle at the door of her room, but there wasn't much she could do then" (Fowles, 2004, p. 26). Besides Clegg is kind to his victim, he is being manipulative so that he covers up his true intentions. "I said, you can't go yet. Please don't oblige me to use force again" (29). The word "please" is one of the words he uses to show a manipulative kindness to her. The woman's silence or refraining from rejecting the man's demands towards her can be understood as a form of politeness. "I was obliged to say that if she did not keep quiet I would have to resort to more of the chloro and CTC (which I showed),

but that if she kept still I wouldn't hurt her" (Fowles, 2004, p. 26). These themes of politeness intersect with those of power and control, and gender roles, underlining the motivations of the characters, and the social context in which they exist.

Politeness has a function to conceal unequal power dynamics that genders experience. The women's kindness toward men, as Miranda's to Clegg, displays expectations of society for women to be polite as in the example that Miranda makes compliments Clegg's home, and he is pleased, "You're very neat." (Fowles, 2004, p. 52). This highlights the unequal power dynamics that can lead women to feel obligated to be kind instead of setting boundaries. Miranda is a woman who raised with the value of being polite, especially when interacting with men. However, Clegg uses Miranda as a manipulation tool by taking advantage of the societal norm that requires women to be kind to maintain control. His attitude shows how genders use politeness as a weapon as in his statement "I spoke gentle, I pretended I was angry, bitter, I begged her, but it was all no use" (93). Gender-related expectations of politeness often have women should be more understanding and obedient than men. As the story unfolds, Miranda opposes Clegg's authority and uses her initiative, which causes her polite image to come apart. She says, "I'm so superior to him. I know this sounds wickedly conceited. But I am" (Fowles, 2004, p. 137). Even though Miranda discomforts, she feels obligated to respond Clegg because of his politeness. She realizes that there is a deceptive maneuver behind his polite exterior, and she is compelled to comply. "I ask him to help this misery who has me under his power. I ask him to help me" (Fowles, 126). The male character's expectation to get the female character's attention and obedience reflects cultural norms that upheld male dominance in relationships. Despite the woman's polite responses, the hesitations and evasions hint at an underlying resistance to man's approaches. "I'm sorry I did . . . what I did. And I should like to thank you for not retaliating. You had every right to" (Fowles, 98). There is a subliminal resistance to the characters giving up their relationship. A silent defiance against the gendered expectations of feminine passivity is conveyed by the woman's rejection to meet the man's gaze. A crucial turning point in Miranda's journey to reclaim her autonomy is her rejection the traditional gender roles and polite compliance. As Miranda says, "I'm not egocentric enough. I'm a woman. I have to lean on something", as Clegg says, "You could lean on me financially", and Miranda responds, "And you on me for everything else? God forbid" (Fowles, 60).

Through illuminating the intricacies of gender dynamics and politeness in relationships, The Collector engages in the motivations of its characters and the larger social environment in which their interactions occur. These different gendered characters present a nice front, but there are more subtle power dynamics at work. The man's polite gestures and woman's false grin conceal their genuine motivations, underscoring the flimsiness of politeness in upholding social norms and permitting manipulation and control. The man's use the woman as a tool to establish authority and control over her through his deceptive polite actions. "I ought to have got someone who would respect me more. Someone ordinary I could teach" (Fowles, 304). He uses his kind attitude to trick the woman into thinking he had to return the favor, taking advantage of the social norm that demands female obedience to achieve his goals. The established power dynamics in relationships are reinforced by the gender standards surrounding politeness. Miranda's cultural conditioning places a strong emphasis on being polite, especially to males. "It was the first time she'd given me a kind look. She was saying, trust me, plain as words. A little smile round her eyes, looking up at me. All eager" (Fowles, 34).

When a woman begins to speak up and resist the authority of a man, she disrupts the power dynamics supported by social norms and politeness, and ultimately reclaims her freedom. "She gave me a fierce cold look, then she turned away. "I don't know who you think I am. If you think I'm somebody rich's daughter and you're going to get a huge ransom, you've got a shock coming" (Fowles, 29). The man's gentle behavior and the woman's unwilling responses contrast with the man's possessive attitude and the woman's discomfort. "First of all I should

like to thank you for not doing so, because I don't want you to kiss me” (64). This contradiction between their inner restlessness and outward politeness raises the possibility that politeness is a superficial facade used to hide power struggles and relationship disagreements. “There was something so nice about her you had to be nice too” (Fowles, 36). “Sometimes I wanted to say to her, please do it again, please let your hair fall forward to toss it back” (Fowles, 65). If a man appears polite, and acts possessive, he will appear to society as a cunning man who exploits society’s standards of feminine etiquette for personal gain. Based on this, the female character thinks like that as well, “He's so cunning, it's incredible. Foolproof” (175). “She was my guest at last and that was all I cared about” (Fowles, 27), and Miranda thinks, “He has a way of standing with his hands by his side or behind his back, as if he doesn't know what on earth to do with them. Respectfully waiting for me to give my orders” (128). These thoughts of the female character about the male character proves that the possessive attitudes of man is perceived by society as a cunning man who acts according to his own interests.

Gender standards and cultural expectations influence a woman’s commitment to polite behavior, especially when interacting with men. As it is stated in the dialogue held between Clegg and Miranda, “I don't want to talk about anything. Just to say I'm sorry.”, “I accept your apologies.”, “Thank you” (Fowles, 98). This reflects societal standards that support male entitlement and female submission in relationships. Women thus demonstrate opposition to traditional gender norms and power dynamics by avoiding from men. Miranda’s reluctance to comply with his demands, despite his apparent politeness, indicates a growing resistance to ideals of femininity and a desire to exert her authority in the relationship. That is because, according to Akkūlah Doğan (2019, p. 136), “Clegg does not want to assault or kill her but just wants to practice his art and suppress his obsession for keeping things. In other words, he would like to keep her as a home decoration.” Miranda thinks, “To him I was just a child amusing herself” (Fowles, 139). Her actions, such as defying Clegg and setting boundaries, breaking all these judgments, suggest that she is regaining control and autonomy, and subverting the power structures supported by societal norms.

2. METHOD

The purpose of this paper is to conduct a literary analysis regarding the aspect of kindness in John Fowles’s novel *The Collector*. A close examination of the relationship and gender relation between the characters is considered, with interpretations concerning feminism. The primary method of analysis contains a close reading of the novel, focusing on key passages that illustrate the interactions between Frederick Clegg and Miranda Grey. These are dialogues, descriptions of certain situations, and some narrative attitudes developed by Fowles to present themes on politeness, power, and gender relations. The coding will make identification of recurring motifs and symbols emphasizing social structures that impinge upon the fortunes of the characters, with particular emphasis on gender roles. A feminism approach tends to see how characters reflect societal expectations of their gender roles. The study analyzes Miranda’s responses to the actions of Clegg and her portrayal contrasted against male characters in an attempt to unravel underlying themes related to victimization and empowerment. The analysis also focuses on the interaction and politeness functions between Clegg and Miranda. These findings will be synthesized into an overall argument regarding the narrative of kindness, power, and gender that is there. It will also try to explain in detail those points which indicate that human encounters are really complex under such influences. In fact, this multifaceted methodology enables the study to pursue depth in knowledge over the theme of kindness in the novel, while at the same time contributing to the discussions on gender dynamics in literature.

2.1 Politeness through the Feminist Approach

Through a feminist approach, the novel's portrayal of politeness highlights the pressure that women must maintain a cheerful outlook, even in awkward or oppressive circumstances. Clegg's kind gestures like "I came to ask you what you'd like for breakfast, there's cereal, eggs, etcetera" (Fowles, 32), and Miranda's "Thank you", her forced smile, as in "It was funny, she almost smiled" (Fowles, 23), is a statement that women are expected to think of men's comfort before their independence. By keeping women in obedient roles and using their kindness to maintain male dominance, she reinforces these traditional gender norms. Feminist theory suggests that man's deceptive kindness to woman reflects larger patriarchal systems that allow men to dominate and control women. "All the time I felt she might ask a question, she'd come out quickly with a question to try and catch me. About how long she had to stay, why I was being so kind to her. I made up answers, but I knew they sounded feeble, it wasn't easy to invent quickly with her" (Fowles, 32). The man's exploitation of a woman's weakness and cultural norms regarding women's obedience and manners perpetuates gendered power dynamics in their relationship. Miranda's strict adherence to etiquette, especially with men like Clegg, is an example of how women are conditioned to prioritize men's comfort and desires over their autonomy. This reinforces the perception that women's politeness is a sign of respect for gender norms, which further perpetuates their oppression in a patriarchal society. Miranda's rejection of Clegg's approaches is an evident that she is a feminist who is critical of traditional gender roles. For example, "She does not like his comments because she thinks that his ignorance and lack of education are the cause of the growing difference between her and Miranda. This intensifies her feelings of inferiority and sometimes she counterattacks while trying to defend her class" (Libichová, 2014, p. 8). As Fredman (2006, p. 11) states, "Miranda claims that she is a person who dislikes the class system and that she does not care about class. However, from time to time she shows contempt for Clegg and most of all his class." Miranda avoids from Clegg's romanticism and Clegg kindly respects her avoidance, "I don't expect you to understand me, I don't expect you to love me like most people, I just want you to try and understand me as much as you can and like me a little if you can" (Fowles, 45). Miranda's avoidance and reluctance to comply with social pressure to conform to the rules of politeness indicate her developing sense of autonomy. This resistance shows that women have the power to set boundaries in their relationships and question patriarchal power dynamics, challenging the idea that they should passively accept men's approaches. Miranda, as an example of a feminist, claims autonomy by opposing to traditional gender roles. When a woman begins to question men's authority and set her boundaries, she begins to subvert the power structures supported by societal norms. By regaining authority, the possibility of women to fight against oppression in male-dominated societies and to establish their will and autonomy, is emphasized. "She'd got all her clothes on and she stared at me again, no sign of fear, bold as brass she was" (Fowles, 28).

The concept of politeness integrates into the feminist approach in comprehending how the novel deals with power dynamics to conduct human interactions comprehensively. It is clear from the linguistics studies that the characters in the novel use a variety of politeness techniques in their speech to get along with others. As Libichová states, "Their choice of vocabulary and syntax determines their personalities as well as the meaning of their ideas" (32). To maintain social harmony, Miranda gently denies Clegg's approaches by using indirect speech acts, "The positive self-image or self-esteem that a person enjoys as a reflection of that person's estimation by others" (Leech, 2014, p. 67). To understand how politeness can be used deceitfully in a conversation, it is necessary to understand Leech's concept of politeness maxims. It is possible that women, like Miranda, are more likely to use language politeness techniques to avoid awkward situations and preserve peace. Miranda skillfully uses language

to set boundaries without offending others, reflecting cultural norms and power dynamics in the process. Male characters like Clegg, on the other hand, could be less concerned with manners and use direct speaking acts to establish power and domination. The difference in use of politeness that the genders experience highlights the societal expectations of women's position. Men like Clegg consciously use politeness, to establish authority and maintain control in relationships, while women like Miranda use it to overcome social pressure and challenge dominance. "She was going to speak but I felt I had to stop her questions, I didn't know she was so sharp. Not like normal people" (Fowles, 32). This interaction demonstrates how politeness can both reinforce and challenge preexisting power inequalities in interactions of genders. John Fowles brilliantly explains how politeness is a control strategy in the novel. This strategy works on Miranda affected by attitudes of Clegg. It is clear in these sentences said by Miranda in the novel,

Sometimes he irritates me so much that I could scream at him. It's not so much the way he looks, though that's bad enough. He's always so respectable, his trousers always have creases, his shirts are always clean. I really think he'd be happier if he wore starched collars. So utterly not with it. And he stands. He's the most tremendous stander-around I've ever met. Always with that I'm-sorry expression on his face, which I begin to realize is actually contentment. The sheer joy of having me under his power, of being able to spend all and every day staring at me. He doesn't care what I say or how I feel — my feelings are meaningless to him — it's the fact that he's got me. (Fowles, 171)

The man uses polite words and draws on social conventions of feminine politeness to force the woman into obedience. The woman's indirect speech indicates how politeness maintains social harmony and regulates the genders' interactions. As Miranda says, "I'm your prisoner, but you want me to be a happy prisoner" (Fowles, 33), "It's not a little thing. It's terrible that you can't treat me as a friend" (69), "I tried to look very understanding, very sympathetic, but it seemed to frighten him" (129).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to some scholars' studies, to promote conversation and preserve social affairs, women frequently employ politeness techniques like "hedges" and "tag questions" (Tannen, 2007, p. 113). This framework uncovers the gendered dynamics at work in the conversation by contrasting the more aggressive speech patterns of male characters like Clegg with the politeness used by feminine characters like Miranda. "Lakoff's description of "men's language" suggested that gendered linguistic norms for men functioned as ways of displaying an engagement with power" (Lakoff, 2004, p. 11). Miranda says "I accept too much. To begin with I thought I must force myself to be matter-of-fact, not let his abnormality take control of the situation. But he might have planned it. He's getting me to behave exactly as he wants" (Fowles, 136). According to Lakoff's theory, characters who are more powerful in society, like Clegg, use politeness as a means of controlling weaker individuals, like Miranda. Additionally, they perpetuate the power disparities that already exist in the story, as Clegg states, "Please be reasonable. You know what you are to me now; can't you see I haven't made all these arrangements just so you'd stay a week more?" (Fowles, 46). "Generally speaking, politeness involves contributing to social harmony and avoiding social conflict" (Holmes, 2013, p. 285). Using language politeness as a tactic might help one to challenge repressive social institutions and establish one's autonomy as Miranda does, "I give you my word of honour that I shall not try to escape" (Fowles, 49). Holmes's structure for *The Collector* might show how Miranda uses tact to set limits and defy Clegg's authority. She does this by hedging and use indirect speech actions to undercut Clegg's power while putting on a front of compliance. Additionally, characters challenge power hierarchies or establish supremacy by using particular discourse methods, such as speech actions or turn-taking patterns. For instance, Frederick Clegg dominates the conversation by giving long monologues that push Miranda's voice to the

sidelines. However, Miranda has the option to challenge and resist gently to Clegg's authority in the conversation by using indirect speech acts or hesitations as a kind of resistance. It is understandable from Clegg's statement, "There was something mischievous about her sometimes, you could see she was looking for trouble, in a nice way. Teasing like" (Fowles, 51). "More elaborate negative politeness work can sometimes be heard in extended talk, often with hesitations" (Yule, 1996, p. 65).

4. CONCLUSION

People use the language as a coping mechanism to lessen acts that could be perceived as intimidating and to preserve social harmony. As Miranda says, "Now you're behaving like a little boy. You forget that you are keeping me here by force. I admit it is quite a gentle force, but it is frightening", or, "You are extraordinary", and "He makes me falsely grateful" (Fowles, 71, 73, 136). Discourse analysis makes it possible to look at how characters interact politely and when they threaten each other. "It tends to focus specifically on aspects of what is unsaid or unwritten (yet communicated)" (Yule, 1996, p. 84). To handle possible threats to their or others' faces, the characters employ politeness techniques like positive politeness and politeness indicators. Aggression or coercion are represented face-threatening behaviors that obstruct communication and draw attention to power disparities. Hedging and indirectness are two linguistic techniques used by feminine characters, like Miranda, to negotiate social situations and uphold relationships. Oppositely, male characters tend to have more assertive speech patterns, which mirror society norms around power and masculinity. The novel's characters assert their agency and subvert repressive power structures through language. Characters challenge prevailing discourse conventions and make their opinions known through the lexical selections, grammatical constructions, and speech acts that employed. "Those who tend to regard connection as the basic dynamic operating between people see attempts to use status differences as manipulative and unfair" (Tannen, 2007, p. 16). For example, Miranda challenges Clegg's authority, and uses qualifying and disclaimers to assert her initiative in the conversation, expressing her reluctance to comply with his demands. As Clegg says, "Very coaxing, she was" (Fowles, 104). There is ambiguity among the linguistic elements that affect the conversation and influence other people's opinions or behaviors. For example, Clegg exploits Miranda's weaknesses and uses persuasive discourse techniques to force her to comply and strengthen his dominance over the discourse. It is understandable from Miranda's statement that she is aware of it, "You fall over yourself being nice to me" (Fowles, 79). The different attitudes and social behaviors of Frederick Clegg and Miranda Grey highlight deeper social power structures when viewed through the prism of politeness. This study also highlights how politeness is used to cover up underlying control, manipulation, and loss of personal initiative in relationships. Ultimately, the complex power dynamics between captor Clegg and captive Miranda highlight the destructive effects of unbridled desire and the blurred boundaries between love and possession. This provides a frightening exploration of the dehumanizing effects of control and obsession, and how they are processed in gentle ways so as not to violate the range of control.

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