



Conceptualizing Bipolar Disorders in Martin Amis's the Pregnant Widow: A Psychosomatic Response

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ABSTRACT

Disorder, whether in human world or in the world of nature, is meaningfully incorporated and treated in literature. The reception of such disorders in the human world has seen a dynamic change. The approach is now more rational and the presentation is more scientific. This article will clarify the possibility of the understanding of bipolar disorders and its implementation in fiction. In this paper our focus will be on the operating factors of such disorders. This research will also investigate the way in which contemporary British novelist Martin Amis has integrated such disorders in his latest fiction The Pregnant Widow.

KEYWORDS: Disorders in Literature, Bipolar Disorders, Disorders in fiction, Disorders in Post-Postmodern Youth

INTRODUCTION:

Literature has never remained an acquiescent bystander of any contravention of the human world. Violation of the human world may bring to mind the idea of disorders. Every disorder is a kind of infringement. From the dawn of the civilization literary artist has responded to it often from their own standpoint. The greatest violation in the early European civilization is the French Revolution. All the romantics like Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley nodded their head with frequent practice of their pen. Bipolar disorder is one such encroachment in the human world that from 1970s it is always lynching on the periphery of British mainstream literature. Martin Amis, the famous son of a renowned father Kingsley Amis has been an active observer of it in the last three decades. This paper will concentrate to comprehend such bipolarism in human disarray. While doing this our sincere endeavour will stink the true air of disorders in the latest fiction of Amis *The Pregnant Widow*.

UNDERSTANDING BIPOLAR DISORDER:

The term 'bipolar disorders' entered in psychology in the 1970s. It was for the first time to understand biological disorder treatment. After the stormy decades bipolar disorder has become a popular term to give impression of any disorder in human psyche. Bipolar disorders usually indicate the fluctuation of mood on regular basis. It is often termed as the great psychic disorder characterized by dramatic mood and behavior changes. Such behavioral changes may take form of depressions. Under the impact of bipolar disorder a person can experience inappropriately good moods or highs or become extremely terrible. Such disorder inculcates a maniac phrase where the victim may commit himself to over activities and duties. This burden of job may lead one towards paranoia even. Bipolar disorder may define either extreme irritation or elation. At the severe level bipolar disorder may lead one to come across delusions and hallucination. "Cyclothymia is a form of bipolar disorder in which hypomania alternates with a low-level, chronic depressive state." (page-152, Psychology Basics). "Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is characterized by alternating mood episodes that vary according to seasonal patterns; the mood changes are thought to be related to changes in the amount of sunlight and accompanying effects on the levels of hormone melatonin." (p-152). Bipolar disorder must be differentiated from depressive disorders, which include major depression (unipolar depression) and dysthymia, a milder but chronic form of depression.

OPERATING FACTORS OF BIPOLAR DISORDERS:

The operators of bipolar disorders are not fully understood yet. This disorder is actively related with mood disorder of depression. Observation shows such disorder as generational. "In this model, a genetic or biochemical predisposition toward the disorder (the bipolar diathesis) may lie dormant until stress triggers the emergence of the illness. The stress may be psychosocial, biological, neurochemical, or a combination of these factors" (p-153). "Investigators suggest that positive life events, such as the birth of a baby or a job promotion, as well as negative life events, such as divorce or the loss of a job, may trigger the onset of episodes in individuals with bipolar disorder. Stressful life events and the social rhythm disruptions that they cause can have adverse effects on a person's circadian rhythms" (p-153). The memory of history or past experience may germinate such disorders even.

LITERATURE AS MIRROR OF DISORDERS:

As it is mentioned earlier violation of human world is a kind of disorder. The World literature has seen so many disorders. The earlier disorder is truly the French Revolution. All the democratic cum romantic artist of Europe responded it constructively. If French Revolution is a move towards democracy in politics, Romanticism is a move towards democracy in literature. Such violation what we call disorders are on the whole good, effective and formative. The World War One and The World War Two are the biggest and darker violation in the human world which has been negatively responded by tall wards of world literature. T.S. Eliot responded in the poem *The Waste Land* (1922) where First World War is an incurable disorder. Later literary artists like Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard have responded despairingly. The waiting of Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, molestation of Stanley in his birthday in *The Birthday Party* and the tossing of coins by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* are the just instances of such disorder with the flavor of literature.

DISORDERS IN BRITISH FICTION:

British mainstream fiction has long obsession with disorders which is essentially psychosomatic. Disorder got immediate theme in the fiction of Laurence Sterne *Tristram Shandy*. The physical malformation or disorders operate his psychic disorder as well. The creation of the monster by Victor Frankenstein in the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley is a type of violation. This violation may be defined as a disorder. Violation breeds violation as disorder engenders further disorder. The character of Miss Havisham in *Great Expectation* by Charles Dickens has become almost a synonym for disorder. The failed promise of her lover and her determination to continue life in her own way immediately brings some disorders and peculiarity. Dickens has been a master artist in portraying such violation in human that we term as disorder.

AMIS AND THE DECADES OF DISORDERS:

Martin Amis did have a turbulent youth during 1970s. It is the decade of great expectations and hard times which ultimately brought forth a bleak house. Feminism is the woman movement that came with the promise of 50-50 participation of men and women in the social construct. With the entry of media culture and popular culture the mainstream of life Britain got a sudden shock. Psycho-biographers claim that the family of Martin Amis had been a victim of this turbulent decade. Amis could not but swallow this tempest. Sally Amis became serious ill of it. Such promise even took the life of Sally Amis. This early misery of Martin Amis brought Amis early maturity. This early mature observation got a different flavor in the fiction of Amis. As it is mentioned earlier, bipolar disorder may origin from historical memory this becomes quite identical with Martin Amis. He has always been debated as feminist proper. Still he believes that feminism promised to achieve equal participation of men and women. This will take century. But this promise has left the postmodern men in a traumatized situation. Finished revolution brings fruits and keeps promises. But unfinished revolution like feminism brings nothing. It germinates violence only. Amis was familiar with such violence narrated earlier.

BIPOLAR DISORDERS IN KEITH NEARING:

Martin Amis has always been a controlling force in the mainstream British fiction. Once again fiction readers feel such shaping force with the

publication of *The Pregnant Widow*. On the periphery of the narration there is the description of a summer in Italy journeyed by a group of university students. At the centre of the novel, there is the fear of Keith, a budding lover of literature. Radical feminists often call Keith Nearing as Keith Fearing. Keith is an infatuated admirer of mainstream British novelist like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and D.H. Lawrence. Memory says that no recent protagonist of fiction has a better serious reader than Keith Nearing. He lives always in a traumatized state of mind. Lily is his love and Scherazade is his desire. Keith is never seen behaving normally. He is seen as someone who is suffering from some metaphysical predicament. Amis himself faced same menace in his twenties. This metaphysical predicament may origin from some definite source.

Scientist will decide whether such disorder has originated from some biochemical predisposition. It is mentioned earlier that disorders most take its origin from generation. If one keeps the turbulent decades in the life of Martin Amis the disorder in Keith Nearing may meet some meaningful explanation. Keith can be taken as the new lad whose father generation met the trauma explained earlier. Bipolar disorders have complicated itself into one such level where it continues itself from one generation to the other. Here bipolar disorders operate in the form of memory inherited from the father generation.

Bipolar disorders can originate from the life events which can be both positive life events and negative life events. Getting of a job is a life event and losing of it is also a life event. One has affirmation and an-

other has negation. Disorders can come from both. Keith's visit to Italy is the positive life event that leads him further to probe into life. The loathing beauty of Scherazade and the inflated breasts of her have pushed Keith in the madding crowd of kinetic desires.

Busy life schedule can generate disorders. Though the staying of the university students in the castle of Italy may be defined as an amoral excursion, one man is constantly seen as busy reader of mainstream British literature. Keith Nearing is a serious reader of fiction. He remains busy in reading a new novel. His initial action indicates compare and contrast. The modest heroines in the fiction of Jane Austen and the immodest proposal of Lily and Scherazade to Keith come as shock that breeds violence and disorders. Keith knows the social discrimination that David Copperfield removes by his willpower. Keith fails to realize the curtain of disenchantment. Out of his breakdown there come the hidden fears. This trepidation operates as obsession throughout the novel *The Pregnant Widow*.

CONCLUSION:

It is always difficult to swallow theory in a novel. This paper has endeavoured to touch some of the sensitive issues of postmodern British fiction, in that Martin Amis is proved to a successful experimentalist. Now literary artist are liberal enough to accept interdisciplinary exchange. Novel is a narration with wider coverage of life where such exchange happens. *The Pregnant Widow* by Martin Amis has become one such novel where psychology meets fiction with broader explanation.

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