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INSIDE AND OUTSIDE STORY OF POST FEMINISM IN MARTIN AMIS'S THE PREGNANT WIDOW

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Abstract:

Eroticism has a wider definition. Martin Amis is the most successful post-modern British fiction writer in defining this. The Pregnant Widow is a demi-bible of polished eroticism. Every psalm of this bible beats post feministic pulse. This small excerpt will be an endeavour to conceptualize post feminism and how it is defined by Amis in his novel The Pregnant Widow. Feminism is often defined as a movement and revolution for the liberation of women. This research paper will focus how feminism came as promise and how they are left untouched. My curiosity equally runs high if this same frustration continues even in the case of post feminism also. Is Amis uniquely unparallel in sharpshooting this?

KEYWORDS:

Genesis of post feminism, Amis and post feminism, untouched promise, failed progeny.

INTRODUCTION

A half-truth is more pernicious than a complete lie. It is debated whether Martin Amis, son of Sir Kingsley Amis was feminist or not. Amis stands as one of the most important contemporary English-language writers. There are critics who usually categorize Amis as a post-feminist. The reason that has often been given is the prevalence of hypersexual culture and its violence in his series of some odd ten or twelve novels. His recent novel *The Pregnant Widow* (Published, 2010) is imagined as the new, debated and complex bible of Post feminism. The title of the novel is potential and functional enough to mark that if feminism as a movement started earlier in the 1920s, it has been left unfinished. Understandably, the story of feminism is the tale of unfinished revolution with concealed probability and promise as it is metaphorically suggested by the title of the novel *The Pregnant Widow*. This brief write up will be an endeavour to explore all such presumed possibilities as I stated in the title of the discourse.

Every „ism? is a promise. Feminism came with the promise of bettering the condition of woman, elevating the position of women as a whole and uplifting the women and their socio-political predicament. The term „Feminism? came into existence in the 19th century as synonym for “women?s emancipation.” The word got currency in the French press of the first „feminist? congress in Paris held in 1892 by Eugene Potonie-Pierre. During the 1890s the term “Feminism” crossed the English Channel. Later, the concept of feminism was realized with a metaphor „waves.? Deborah Siegel calls „the oceanography of feminist movement.?(Sisterhood, interrupted. P123). Feminism is believed to have three waves. The „First Wave? of 1920s is granted as the continuation of the primordial idea. The „Second Wave? of 1960s is the continuation of the first.

The origin of post feminism dates back to the media-culture of 1980s. Heywood and Drake very justly claimed in *The Third Wave Agenda* : “We’re pop-culture babies; we want some pleasure with our

critical analysis”(p51). What does the word „post? suggest then? „Post? may evoke the „aftermath? of Third Wave of feminism, which is “a budding political movement”. In contrast to that, post feminism is “anti-feminist and apolitical”. It is anti-feminist as its grants „pornography?, „date-rape?, „flexible ideology?, „escort-culture?, „heterosexism and „living-art-gallery? etc. Are there any post feminist then? The post feminists are no wave. But the spirit of this abounds in personalities----- „glamorous Naomi Wolf? and „self-publicist Camille Paglia?. Critics like Germaine Greer have gladly accepted the post feminism as „a branch of liberal humanism? (The Female Eunuch, 179) where women think that they can have it all ----- „fashion, cosmetics and over enjoyment of sex?. There are few who think post feminism as „returns of the prefeminism?. Natasha Walter justly named her book as The New Feminism : Returns of sexism (1998). Then what is future of post feminism? In an in-depth study of Martin Amis's The Pregnant Widow I will endeavour to map his view of post feminism what is titled as „unfinished movement?. Unfinished movement brings no fruit. It germinates violence. Even on that point he is severely criticized by Germaine Greer: “Mr. Amis has no idea of history. History does not occur daily” (Face to Face Martin Amis).

Question rises in our mind: Is post feminism an unintentional return to the „baboon society??*
Has Post feminism developed the „instinct of shore-bird? **

Martin Amis, usually known as the „literary bad boy of Britain? is highly influential in this way. Like his previous novel London Fields, The Pregnant Widow (2010) is proved to be another experimental work where he has made a searching analysis of all these aforesaid queries. Like all other „isms? feminism is long-delayed revolution the three waves of which have already touched upon. Amis has brilliantly sketched the history of such revolution. The Pregnant Widow is about a summer vacation of a group of university students in Italy. Keith Nearing is the male protagonist of the novel. Lily is his girl friend and Schcherazade is another girl of his interest. Central motif of the novel is the Keith's loss of innocence and his pure passion for Lily and his erotic lust for Schcherazade. Violet is Keith's sister who has pretty similarity with Amis's own sister Sally both being the victims of the unfinished revolution mentioned earlier. Feminism has already crossed such three waves. But it has reached such crucial juncture where revolution, instead of bringing something positive for women breeds violence. Natasha Walter has rightly said: “Women are still poorer”. (The New Feminism, 1998).

For the better understanding of the post feminism we will go back to the very title of the novel The Pregnant Widow. Let us concentrate on the title. Question may come: Who is the „Widow?? Why and how did it become „Pregnant??

Strangely enough or perhaps not strangely at all, Amis believes that every revolution is a promise and a prospect. Feminism came out with such promise. In order to prove this we may go back to the very name Keith Talent in London Fields. The word „Talent? is the very suggestive of the prospect. But the promise that beginners of feminism showed was somewhat diminished with their departure. The feminism without its beginners at once became „Widow?. One may ask: Who did kill the husband? The entry of post-modern culture and celebration of exploitation of women by themselves jointly strangled the real purpose of feminism. In this context Amis himself is a witness of that. His sister Sally used to drink heavily and spends her days and nights with wine and sex. Amis believes that Feminism instead of becoming a promise for the women has left the women still in nightmare and in violence that will push them gradually into madness. Natasha Walter rightly said: “Women are still slave”. But at the same time it is also suggested that feminism which I stated as revolution was almost nearing the goal. The sudden intervention of „pop culture? , „media-culture? and the larger participation of the women in the social activities(such as „fashion?, „one-night-stand? and the „live-art-gallery?) has hammered the whole growth of it.

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