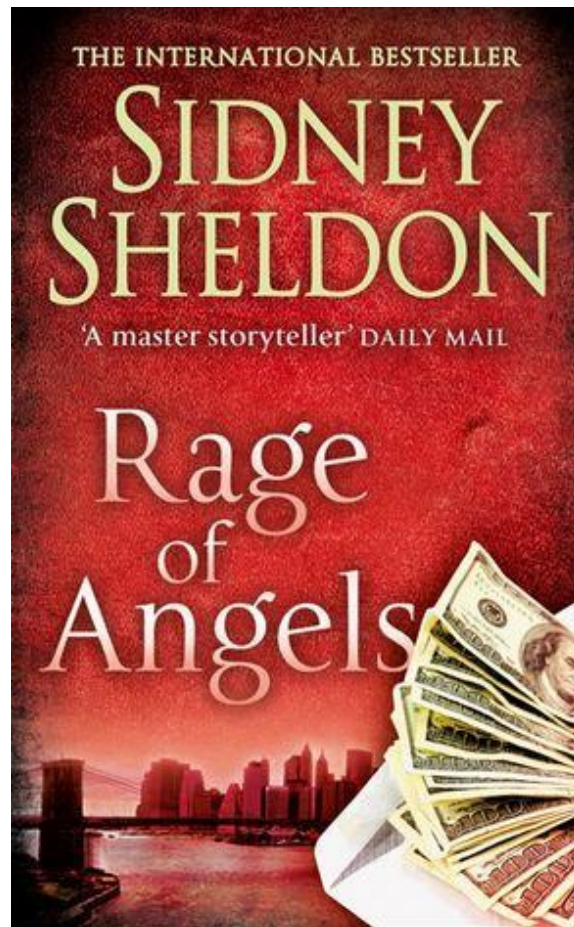


Postmodernism and the Women Protagonists of Sidney Sheldon

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Abstract

The incessant thrill of Sidney Sheldon's novels arises from the psychological impact left by one character over the other. Noticeably, the women characters of Sheldon take a lead role in bringing serendipitous link to his stories. They become psychological tools around whom the entire stories revolve. The delineation of Jennifer Parker in *Rage of Angels* (1980), Tracy Whitney in *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985), and Ashley Patterson in *Tell me your Dreams* (1998) stand a fool proof for the victim versus victor logistics thus unveiling the elements of postmodernism in the society. This perhaps incurs adequate mental agility of the victimized sect especially when it exclusively comprises women. The gradual evolution of a victim into victor in the life span of Sidney's women protagonists is based on the impact of postmodernism which

entertain their extreme courage, audacity, determination, societal ingenuity, wrath over societal injustice, rage over vulnerable personal atrocities and victimization besides assertiveness combined with diplomacy to run ahead of the race. This paper is an effort to explore the connection between the postmodernism and psychological outbursts of women protagonists of Sidney Sheldon's novels namely *Rage of Angels* (1980), *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985) and *Tell me your Dreams* (1998).

Keywords: Postmodernism, Sidney Sheldon, Meta-ethical moral relativism in Sidney Sheldon's Women Characters, Psychological outburst of Sheldon's women protagonists, Empowered women protagonists of Sidney.

1.1 Introduction

The American novelist, Sidney Sheldon (11 February 1917-30 January 2007) is world renowned as a dramatist, novelist, screen-playwright, producer and an auto-biographer. Sidney has authored eighteen novels namely *The Naked Face* (1970), *The Other Side of the Midnight* (1973), *A Stranger in the Mirror* (1976), *Bloodline* (1977), *Rage of Angels* (1980), *Master of the Game* (1982), *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985), *Wind Mills of Gods* (1987), *The Sands of Time* (1988), *The Memories of Midnight* (1990), *The Doomsday Conspiracy* (1991), *The Stars Shine Down* (1992), *Nothing Lasts Forever* (1994), *Morning, Noon and Night* (1995), *The Best Laid Plans* (1997), *Tell me your Dreams* (1998), *The Sky is Falling* (2001), and *Are you Afraid of the Dark?* (2004). His swan-song is his auto-biography, *The Other Side of Me* (2005). Apart from these works Sidney has proved his phenomenal style in his plays like *The Merry Widow* (1943), *Jackpot* (1944), *Dream with Music* (1944), *Alice in Arms* (1945), *Redhead* (1959), and *Roman Candle* (1960). The influence of his Russian Jewish ancestry has become prevalent and obvious in many of his literary creations.

1.2 Sidney's Women Protagonists and Postmodernism

Postmodernism has its firm roots in the ironical and cynical attitude of people as a result of distrust towards the ethical practice of societal dogmas. As postmodernism rejects totality, Sidney's women protagonists also dare their decisions empowering themselves to evolve as victors instead of resuming to be victimized scapegoats in their own ways. The audacity of Jennifer Parker in handling Michael Moretti, the scheming of Tracy Whitney in avenging Romano and the altar of Ashley by name Tony committing castrated murders invariably exhibit their intense mental transformation which invigorate them to rise to their vulnerable situational anxiety of avenging the criminals. Jennifer Parker and Tracy Whitney diplomatically destine the doom of their villains by executing a law breach in retaliation to their innocent victimization. Even though they take justice in their hands they play a very safe game to set themselves free the clutches of law. As a matter of fact, Ashley's character delineation edifies a difference here for all her crimes under the refuge of psychological reasons of her ill mental health denoted as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD) or Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID).

1.3 Postmodernism in Select Novels of Sidney

Sidney's novels generally embark on the traces of post modernism and its pervasiveness in American Society. To enunciate precisely, the post modernistic evidences delineated in his novels exhibit the unethical practices cropping up from avarice, corruption, crime, covetousness,

greed, jealous, perversion, rage and sexual promiscuity. Postmodernism becomes evident when one takes any vile to execute one's plan or to live a lifestyle of one's wish oblivious of the necessary human ethics as stated subsequently in the select novels of Sidney Sheldon namely *Rage of Angels* (1980), *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985), and in *Tell me your Dreams* (1998):

1. The compromise of Jennifer Parker in *Rage of Angels* (1980), on her professional and personal ethics exhibits the avenues of postmodernism in the plot construction of Sidney's *Rage of Angels*. The noticeable usage of the contradictory phrases "rage" and "angels" overtly exemplify postmodernism in Sidney's diction which highlights the contradictory conceptualization of 'evil' and 'goodness'. The incidents of sexual promiscuity in *Rage of Angels* also reinstate the elements of postmodernism in the novel.
2. Tracy Whitney's vulnerable predicaments during her imprisonment by lesbian companions along with her which leads to her miscarriage metamorphoses her into a strongly determined avenger through every possible opportunity that comes across her way. At situations Tracy also empowers herself to take risk towards creating an opportunity to avenge her victimization through the bankruptcy and death of her victors. The indulgence of Tracy in unlawful means to achieve her goals well showcase the elements of postmodernism in *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985).
3. Ashley's mental distress caused due to her molestation by her father paves the way for her Multiple Personality Disorder. The altars namely Tony and Alette that get developed in her mind take a vent for her strong emotions like love for worldly fantasy and revenge over men in general. The castrated murders which she commits when she lives as Tony express the elements of postmodernism in *Tell me your Dream* (1998).

1.4 Jennifer Parker's Law Breach and Mood-Swings

Jennifer Parker seems to swing between Adam, a renowned politician who uplifts her profile and a mafia master, Michael Moretti who crumbles down her career of a phenomenal attorney. The thrill of the story gets sustained at every psychological outburst of Jennifer Parker who compromises with her law breach that makes Michael Moretti the beneficiary of her legal ingenuity against her conscience for the sake of her son born of Adam. Her physical relationship with Michael Moretti and astounding offering of her potential arguments for unrighteous causes to represent Michael Moretti serve proofs for her postmodernism in her physiological and materialistic lifestyle.

1.5 Tracy Whitney's Avenge Through Unlawful Means

Tracy in the process of accumulating wealth makes an open challenge to play chess with two expert players where she bets to win one game and assure draw-declaration for the other. The beauty here is her blindfolded game playing of chess without knowing the nuances of it. Her logistics to repeat the move of one great player with that of the other in two different places at the same time edifies her unethical betting. She diplomatically makes one fall a pawn in her hands using her business intellect and adeptness. Her potential go-getting after becoming a prey to the ruthless atrocities through societal evils is actually a postmodern transformation.

1.6 Ashley's Wrath Over Men Resulting in Castrated Murders

Ashley's wrath over men gets unleashed when her altar Tony commits castrated murders thinking that to be safeguarding measure of a woman from men. This psychological frenzy state of Ashley has its fulcrum of her childhood molestation. Her longing for her mother's love and lack of confidence in men become very evident in many situations. The vulnerable psychic disorders depicted in *Tell me your Dreams* (1998) is certainly a subject of postmodernism. The murders committed by Tony, the altar of Ashley shall not be punished as it doesn't live individually in a separate body. It is here the law breach of Ashley is excused due to her mental disorders. Hence, instead of severe verdict she enjoys rejuvenation through her psychiatrist in the mental asylum to which she is sent. These psychological intricacies of Ashley and their overlapping of law exhibit both postmodernism besides meta-ethical moral relativism.

1.7 Meta – Ethical Moral Relativism in Sidney's Women Characters

The women protagonists of Sidney's novels undergo a drastic mental metamorphosis resulting in their meta-ethical moral relativistic indulgences described in his novels. In fact, moral relativism has not been the crux of significant literary discussions until 20th century. Actually, it is the American sociologist, William Graham Sumner (1840-1910) who briefs on moral relativism in his *Folkways* (1907). Moral relativism deals with discrepancies in the relative significance and appropriateness of an individual's decision-making potentiality with respect to the crucial situations faced. Whereas meta-ethical moral relativism figures out the extreme differences of people's perceptions about their individual practicing of virtues, and justification of their lifestyle through phrases like "good", "bad", "right" and "wrong" in their everyday life. Here their special dictum and discretion is fathomable to their enigmatic situations. The truth or falsity of moral judgments, or their justification, is not absolute or universal, but is relative to the traditions, convictions, or practices of a group of persons (Gowans, 2015).

1.8 Conclusion

The postmodern analysis of Sidney's women protagonists, namely, Jennifer Parker delineated in *Rage of Angels* (1980), Tracy Whitney depicted in *If Tomorrow Comes* (1985), and Ashley Patterson projected in *Tell me your Dreams* (1998) explicitly open the avenue for perceiving the meta-ethical moral relativism prevailed in their society. Sidney purposely makes them fall a prey to into the devouring crookedness of villainous society that victimizes them to add thrill and adventure to his genre. The vulnerable atrocities and sufferings undergone by Jennifer Parker, Tracy Whitney and Ashley transform them into the strongest of all in their own respective ways. They all show a drastic change in their personal believes, practices, besides their strategic response through their own ways of retaliation on the society that victimized them.

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