

The Orientation of Affections in the Selected Novels of Contemporary American Novelists

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Abstract- The novels of the present day are voluminous and fiction motivated. There are in certain respects domestic novels which seek to resound some of the issues pertaining to human health, especially which of the mind and heart and to cure its illness there is the remedies inspired by home treats -- the treats of love and affection. The novels of Tyler and writer Kingsbury are due to complete the essences of the title.

INTRODUCTION

The fictional character Josh in Kingsbury's novel *This Side of Heaven*, passionately seeks a reunion but his options having been exhausted have been put to the test. He wants to meet his daughter but there is a hindrance; his physical harm threatens him and he is on the throes of finding mercy from the judge. As a person and member of the judicial system, the judge is less than understanding. It is only after Josh's death that the compensatory money is cleared. As a person Josh suffers intense, 'physical', 'psychological' and 'emotional' pain.

There is a character similitude to Connor in Kingsbury's novel *Oceans Apart*. The choice of profession over family leaves him distressed resulting in an affair. His feelings of remorse, guides him to urgently seek out his son. As a person he is humane. Reverting to the past, Connor's occupation however had pushed him to the extent of infidelity. Lack of closeness with his wife, children and father had barred him from enjoying the joys of family life. The choice of profession over family leaves him worried and thus, the illegal affair. Apart from establishing a profession, Connor after his wrongdoing and convicted by his guilt, feels the vital require to reunite with his wife. He loves his wife. However, the impact of the trouble he has somehow acquired results in his inquiring about Kiahna. He inquires

about her at the airport and finds her name in the list of wounded. He invites worry into his married life, and his mind polluted by opinion and memories of Kiahna leads him to enquire about her. However, after thoughtful the need to move on, he progresses from the setback of memories. The trouble rears its head when information of legal processes involving custody of Max is informed to Connor. Connor, affected by the news, pursues a new idea, the need for a boy child. As a husband Connor had failed, he had failed to recognize the needs of his wife and he sought out a new need, the need for a boy child.

The absence of a boy child in his family affected Connor and spurred by the thinking of possessing the child, he tries to win their affections to secure Max as his son. Connor is an outstanding character, representative of a man faced by a conflict in real life. Connor acknowledged the concern to his wife. The honest answer he had committed to her had affected their marital relationship for a brief time. As Lazarus states, revelation of particular events would lead to wife battering; in Connor's case — 'marital discontentment'. Connor understands the devastation he had unintentionally caused to his family. He realizes his foolishness and surrenders to the possibility of losing the boy. Once more he feels lost. The sacrifices of a man who desperately wanted a boy child is reminiscent in the character sketch of Connor. He decides to let go of the child. He does not want to risk the affections, love and attachments of his marital life. This is a universal phenomenon; not contrary to people belonging to different nationalities.

As a character Connor can be used as a character sketch for discussing marital relationships. There is another character worth for analysis and observation. Kiahna in the same novel *Oceans Apart* provides the

readers with the example of sacrifice; by resisting the urge to start over a new life she relentlessly suffers herself to the duties of a single mother. With responsibilities, she seeks the guidance of Ramey and her friend's father in matters relating to the custody of her son. She loves the child she had given birth to and considering the seriousness of her role as stewardess in the airline industry, she strives to ensure her child's safety. She is a mother depending on God to solve her problem.

Another significant character portrait is Kiahna. Kiahna's devotion to the roles she carries, first as a single mother, and second as a full time worker at the work force is representative of working women and the scenario of the twenty-first century. Kingsbury pens her character with wonderful colors. Her readers love the character roles she invents for her fictional characters and produces tremendous insights on writing creatively about people and about choosing life filled with options, where there is joy and hope for her characters. In her novel *Where Yesterday Lives*, Kingsbury seeks to explore the characters' proximity with each other. This is unlike her other novels, for it provides remarkable insight on attachments with 'caregivers'. John Barrett is a remarkable character portrait. Though the novelist commits this character to a short life span, she gives him a voice. John lives in the memories of his children and wife.

In the descriptions given by his daughter Ellen, John is the ideal father. Her memories of him as a teacher in the area of sports, has enriched her experience in the workplace and has established her career. Prior to understanding John's influence on his daughter's career, it is essential to draw attention to his characteristics. As a father, he has supported his family financially and has loved them; by spending quality time with them and being a wonderful role model. The Barrett siblings have learned from their father the need to show charity to the poor and needy. John Barrett is a man who lives in close proximity with his family. When he is financially stable he is able to live happily with his family. He does not want to dash the hope of his family. However, when he has been laid back from his job, he is disturbed and is unable to face his family. He leaves the family to recuperate from the blow. However, he returns to his family and finds another job. As a father he feels and as a father, he loves by understanding the need to

return to his family he is examined to be a man of integrity.

Tyler's novel *The Amateur Marriage* also presents a unique father figure. Michael is a wonderful father. He loves his children but he is not presented in the same wave length as John Barrett in Kingsbury's novel *Where Yesterday Lives*. Kingsbury presents another character worth describing about; it is Kiahna in the novel *Oceans Apart*. Kiahna loves her child to the extent that she teaches him a song that reminds him of her when he is alone and in the 'care' of her friend Ramey. Kiahna too is an exemplary character. Another important aspect that requires inspiration to draw from is her firm decision to be a mother first and foremost. She loves her son and both of them spend time playing games during their spare time. This shows her heartfelt desire to be a mother first and then a flight attendant. She also teaches her son about God and gives him a Bible. Her inspiration having been taken from her love for God is divine. She allows this impact to touch her son's heart. With the ever present need to draw inspiration from God it is necessary to understand the scenario from which characters like Kiahna and John Barrett derive inspiration. Kiahna, for instance, is deeply rooted in hope. She had let down her guard when in her early twenties. Her hope of becoming a doctor had been crushed and with a baby to take care of, she decidedly lets go of her ambition and takes on the responsibility of a mother. With little or no experience she has successfully mothered her child. Her responsibility reaches the utmost of defeated expectations when she is confronted with death. With the risks of her job as stewardess stirring her soul, she suffers herself to take the risk of writing her desires for the welfare of her son.

Kiahna's letters offer readers with keen insights on responsibility. Kiahna had insights on Max's supposed future in the event of her death and she knew that foster care would not give her child true love. In her will, Kiahna made it a point to mention her intentions clearly; that the biological father Connor, would be given the chance to know about his son before any decision could be made about his custody.

Kingsbury's insight gives readers glances to understanding maternal responsibility. Kiahna Siefert is a remarkable character portrait. She expounds her thoughts and concern for her child at a very young

age. Despite the fact that there were very few chances of air crashes, she materialized her feelings into writing, and decided to take no risks concerning her child. It is her plan that helped her son find his father and increased his chances of getting a permanent home. She knew the need to grow up under biological parents. Her understanding of love, care and affection let her devise a plan which is directed by her faith in God. Her love for her son is based on her love for God. With her love for God increasing day by day and enriching her insights on life, she lived out her faith. This is evidently steered by their decision to live with integrity. This is true in the character's portraiture of Ezra in Tyler's novel *Dinner at the Homesick Restaurant*. Ezra is presented in the light of people presented in innocent and pure portraiture. In better words, with no intention of doing wrong; he is kind, gentle and lovable.

Ezra's physique attracts women and Ezra in his innocence does not find the attraction, the least bit tempting. When his brother's girlfriends visit their home, he does not give way to temptation, for in his heart is of a mother. With little or no experience she has successfully mothered her child. Her responsibility reaches the utmost of defeated expectations when she is confronted with death. With the risks of her job as stewardess stirring her soul, she suffers herself to take the risk of writing her desires for the welfare of her son.

Ezra's mother could have enlightened him about Cody's plan but she does not do so. Soon enough the mother and son become the pair who look at the couple living a married life. It is clearly visible that the family suffers due to the miscalculated plans. However, the feeling of being at home is etched in Ezra's mind and after the truth sinks into his heart, he feels accustomed to the plans sought out for the character by the novelist. The reason for the trouble is the journey of rivalry Ezra is faced with since childhood. The incident of the misfiring of the arrow at the park, the splattering of adult magazines on the floor in Ezra's room and the disappearance of Ezra's friend's whistle which was later found in his friend's coat. Ezra never married. He had never found the ideal girl he had found in Ruth.

After marriage, Cody Tull visits his family home with his wife and son at Baltimore. The only time Cody has shown visible extent of his love and affections for his brother goes back to childhood

when the three siblings were old enough to go shopping for Christmas. The beautiful memory of Cody pulling his brother's sleeve in protective gesture gives readers in depth analysis of the brother's feelings towards each other. Cody is the brother who is externally in conflict with Ezra. Ezra has feelings of brotherly affection and it permits him to move on without harboring 'threatening' feelings like jealousy, anger, bitterness, remorse, and guilt towards his brother Cody; whenever he drops in with his family at Baltimore.

Another insight that stupefies readers is Cody's audacity and self imposing nature. He is also successful in his career. With this success he disregards the need to set aside negative emotions and feelings. He requires attention, and in regard to finding himself he is a disqualified man; for he does not reach out to his brother to seek reconciliation. In other words, he does not know how to do so. He justifies his actions every time he comes across his brother, and seeks less comfort and guidance. At the time of understanding, he refuses correction, and steers towards unsuccessful methods of recuperation; by harboring strife and discontentment, Cody hurts himself when his son steadfastly exposes his weakness. He resigns in silence. Gornick avers, "Pearl has always been angry: now she'll be in a rage until she dies. Her children traumatized by their need for her love, will flinch before that rage for the rest of their lives, but not one of them will walk away. Tyler makes this inability to leave seem moving and inevitable...." (433). There are positive traits, and Tyler does well in exploiting the characters to the greatest extent; by analyzing the need to remain steadfast, Tyler has allowed Luke, the son of Cody to resist the urge to take sides. He is not disappointed but sad; frustrated by the constant battle raging between his parents. Their wars leave him devastated, and at a particular instance he is compelled to leave home. The 'mental' and 'emotional' devastation helps him to realize the need for change.

At Baltimore, Luke's friendship with his uncle Ezra is heartwarming. Luke understands quite easily that his father and uncle were at poles with each other. Luke possesses a strong personality, capable of understanding the need to love and let love and also trust wholeheartedly. He is a wonderful son, misunderstood by his parents. His casual friendship with his uncle gives readers insight on the bond of

friendship between close relatives; by considering the distressful events occurring in his home especially due to the conflict between his parents, it is evident that his mother and father never understood the true meaning of quality time.

Mike, in Kingsbury's novel, *Where Yesterday Lives*, is an epitome of a man challenged by lifestyle. The present day calls him to be a man after his own heart, but values and godly principles have molded Mike to seek after that which is right. He could have married a girl who is after materialistic values but his focus was on Ellen Barrett, a girl who chooses to live her life with values. His preference for Ellen is also marked by his love for godly principles taught in the Holy Bible. It is his decision to stand by his preference and ardent love for God that is truly inspiring. With the news of his father-in-law's death, he is sad and he comforts his wife. His happiness is visited by his wife's desperate plea to be with him, and with an aversion towards death taking him personally he is compelled to live alone. He is 'emotionally' stable. He recalls the wonderful times he had with his wife and when in solitude, he realizes his mistake and leaves to reconcile with his wife. He is a happy man, able to understand his wife's 'emotional' needs and mends the relationship by booking a room to confess his feelings to his wife and to ensure that his wife's confidence in him is regained.

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