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Who Exactly is Nicola Six?: Identifying Psychopathic Traits of the Female Psychopath in *London Fields* by Martin Amis

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Abstract

Objectives: This study delves into the overlooked realm of female psychopathy and its depictions in contemporary crime fiction, focussing on *London Fields* (1989) by Martin Amis. It explores the notion of female psychopathy through its female protagonist, Nicola Six, and examines the degrees of psychopathy and antisocial disorder symptoms reflected through Nicola's diverse psychopathic manifestations.

Methods: While existing scholarship on this novel has primarily concentrated on male characters, this study employs the psychoanalytic approach to examine the psychological complexities of the female character, Nicola. Employing textual analysis, it utilises the Psychopathic Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) (1991) by Robert D. Hare to analyse the issues of antisocial personality disorders from a psychological perspective.

Results: Nicola displays her psychopathic nature at an early age by utilising her beauty and intelligence to control all men in her life for her own design.

Conclusions: Nicola is an example of a mentality-disturbed female character that upholds her femininity all while using her beauty and intelligence to abuse and control others. Nicola also embodies both the two "personality traits" and "antisocial" factors listed in the PCL-R checklist. In future studies, an analysis of psychopathic female characters can be conducted by employing Hare's PCL-R checklist to examine contemporary portrayals of female psychopaths as working and functioning individuals in society.

Keywords: Female Psychopathy, *London Fields*, Martin Amis, Psychopathic Traits, Psychopathic Checklist-Revised (PCL-R)

من هي بالضبط نيكولا سكس؟ تعرُّف الصفات السيكوباتيه في المرأة السيكوباتية في رو اية حقول لندن بقلم مارتن أميس

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ملخّص

الأهداف: تتعمَّق هذه الدراسة في عالم الاعتلال النفسي الأنثوي المهمل وتصويره في روايات الجريمة المعاصرة مع التركيز على رواية حقول لندن (1989) لمارتن أميس؛ إذ يستكشف فكرة الاعتلال النفسي الأنثوي عبر بطلته نيكولا سيكس ويفحص درجات الاعتلال النفسي وأعراض الاضطراب المعادي للمجتمع التي تنعكس عبر مظاهر الاعتلال النفسي المتنوعة لنيكولا.

طرق البحث: في حين أن الأبحاث الحالية حول هذه الرواية ركزت في المقام الأول على الشخصيات الذكورية فإن هذه الدراسة تستخدم منهج التحليل النفسي لفحص التعقيدات النفسية للشخصية الأنثوية لشخصيه نيكولا، وباستخدام التحليل النصي فإنه يستخدم قائمة مراجعة الاعتلال النفسي (PCL-R) التي كتبها دكتور روبرت د. هير (1991) لتحليل قضايا اضطرابات الشخصية المعادية للمجتمع من منظور نفسي.

النتائج: تظهر نيكولا طبيعتها السيكوباتية في سِنٍّ مبكِّرة عبرَ استغلال جمالها وذكائها للسيطرة على جميع الرجال في حياتها من أجل تحقيق أهدافها الخاصة.

الاستنتاجات: نيكولا نموذج للشخصية الأنثوية المضطربة عقليًّا التي تتمسك بأنوثتها وتستخدم جمالها وذكائها في الإساءة إلى الآخرين والسيطرة عليهم. تجسد نيكولا أيضًا كلا من "السمات الشخصية" والعوامل "المعادية للمجتمع" المدرجة في قائمة فحص PCL-R. في الدراسات المستقبلية، ويمكن إجراء تحليل للشخصيات الأنثوية السيكوباتية عبرَ استخدام قائمة الدكتور روبرت د. هيرا PCL-R المرجعية لفحص الصور المعاصرة للإناث السيكوباتيات بِوَصفِهِنَّ أفرادًا عاملات وفاعلات في المجتمع.

الكلمات الدالة: الاختلال النفسي الأنثوي، حقول لندن، مارتن أميس، الصفات السيكوباتيه، قائمة مراجعة الاعتلال النفسي المنقحة (PCL-R).

1. Introduction:

Crime fiction can be considered as a unique space in which many authors can explore different issues and challenge the traditional models of female identity and characterisation. Many classical crime fiction authors, such as Agatha Christie (1890-1976) and Stephen King (b. 1947), have challenged the conventional female roles in fiction by creating multi-layered and psychologically convoluted female offenders. Unlike the established female characterisation portrayed in the earlier crime fiction confining them to the roles of mothers, daughters, wives and helpless victims, who are always seen in need of assistance or rescuing (Miskimmin, 2020, p. 2), in contemporary crime fiction, many female characters are portrayed as ruthless killers, femme fatales, and brutal psychopaths.

Contemporary crime fiction started to witness a shift whereby female characters started to gain equal representation to male characters at the start of the 20th century. One of the main crime fiction literary authors is Christie who portrays different killers and murderers most of which are women such as in *The Mystery of the Blue Train* (1928) and *Death on the Nile* (1937). Not only has contemporary crime fiction begun to become more inclusive of female characters, they are portrayed with complicated motives and complex backgrounds. Yet, until the present day, any crimes committed by women still seem to be unnatural and out of order; indeed, such exclusiveness is not only limited to literary studies but also scientific studies related to criminality and antisocial disorders.

One of the more well-known forms of antisocial disorder is psychopathy, which is defined as 'a severe disorder of personality, essentially comprising pathology in the number of the traditional personality disorder types'. A pathological level of narcissism is at the core of a psychopathic individual alongside clinically significant traits of dissocial, paranoid, and histrionic personality disorders and can exist in both men and women (Lee & Salekin, 2010). Yet different studies have proposed that the manifestation of psychopathy tends to be different in men and women such as the levels of shamelessness, aggression, violence, and risks (Hinks et al., 2010). The traditional belief is that female psychopaths are not considered with the same degree of fear as male psychopaths since, conventionally, women are assumed to not be harmful in their nature. When it comes to the dangerous nature of psychopaths, the Canadian forensic psychologist, who is well-known for his research in the field of criminal psychology, Dr. Robert D. Hare (b. 1934) is considered as one of the leading exports to psychopathy and antisocial personality disorders. Hare has set the first clinically approved tool to identify and recognise psychopathic individuals which is the Psychopathy Checklist-Revised (PCL-R) in 1991 (Hare et al., 1991). This paper, hence, utilises Hare's psychopathic checklist revised and psychopathic studies as the main theoretical approaches in order to address the two objectives in the study.

The author chosen for analysis is Martin Amis, born in 1949, Oxford in England; a contemporary English novelist known for his unique writing style and brilliant narrative technique mixed with gothic and dark postmodern elements. *London Fields* (1989) is one of Aims' most recognised literary novels apart from *Money* (1984). It tells the story of a post-apocalyptic London set in 1999, where the city suffers from social, moral, and environmental decay as London and the world are being threatened by "the Crisis", which is something that remains unknown. The three main male characters, namely Samson Young, the narrator, Keith Talent "The Cheat" and Guy Clinch "The dart player", all meet in the Black Cross pub, where they meet the anti-heroine Nicola Six, a 34-year-old woman from an unknown background and nationality, as she comes to the pub after attending a funeral. Nicola is aware that she will be murdered on 5 November 1999, which is on her 35th birthday, a few minutes after midnight and decides to search for her killer. Amis portrays Nicola as very beautiful, intelligent, cruel, and manipulative as she goes on her way to destroy all the main male characters' lives for her own selfish reasons.

2. Literature Review:

2.1 *London Fields* (1989) by Martin Amis

London Fields (1989) by Amis is one of the most controversial and ambitious novels. Not only he was able to tell the story of a post-apocalyptic London with a society that has lost its morals, Amis was able to create what is believed to be the most convoluted and psychologically complicated female character, Nicola Six. Although Nicola is the protagonist and the anti-hero in the story, yet a rather limited number of studies have been conducted that address her characterisation and

psychological condition. Brook (2006), for example, argues that Nicola's characterisation is only an expression of "Amis' ambivalent attitude towards aesthetic form through the use of female authorial doubles" (p. 87). Although Brook examines Nicola's characterisation from textual and content aspect, her study has unfortunately overlooked the psychological aspect of Nicola's psyche. From another perspective, Gwóźdź (2018) examines the role of masculinity and pornography in the novel all while focussing on Nicola's sexuality and pornographic depictions. Gwóźdź also applies the male gaze theory and the image of Nicola as a la femme fatale; "[a]lthough Nicola Six is, in all her sexual self-confidence and promiscuity, a largely overdrawn male fantasy figure, she easily manages to seduce Guy and Keith and ultimately cause their downfalls by using the weapons of sex and self-made pornography" (2018, p. 295).

2.2 Female Psychopathy

The Mask of Sanity (1941) by the American psychiatrist and pioneer in the field of psychopathy, Hervey M. Cleckley (1903-1984), provides the very first comprehensive clinical examination of antisocial personality disorders and psychopathy to the general population. His study, similar to Hare's studies, had recognised a specific set of characteristics founded in psychopathic individuals which are "superficial charm, lack of guilt, insincerity, an inability to learn from experience, the absence of any delusional or irrational thinking" (Hare, 1996, p. 347). However, it was only recently that Hare was able to develop a reliable and universally acknowledged procedure to detect psychopaths which were tested on male prison inmates, namely the PCL-R checklist (Hare, 1991). Although Hare's studies were tested on "samples of male prisoners", Hare's checklist does not deny the existence of female psychopaths or that psychopathy is a male condition. According to Hare (1996):

More recent research has examined the prevalence of APD 'antisocial disorder' within community samples of male and females […] the base rate of Antisocial personality disorder was much higher for males (4.5%) than for females (0.8%) in the general population […] the differences in antisocial personality disorder prevalence found between males and females in the general population may be a reflection of behavioral differences in the manifestation of psychopathy rather than affective or interpersonal difference (p. 532)

Hare acknowledges the fact that it was not until recently that the condition of antisocial personality disorders or psychopathic behaviour could also be applied and detected in women. This is because the clinical studies were not conducted on female killers or female criminals but rather on university studies and ordinary women. The findings were different from the male trials; they suggest that 9% to 31% percent of the tested women had shown signs of psychopathy when these results were contrasted to the male samples. Hence, although the percentage of female psychopaths was lower, they do exist in the general population. Until the present day, different studies have explored the issue of female psychopathy from different perspectives and, although these studies do recognise that female and male psychopaths are different in certain characteristics, the general understanding of them remains the same.

In the field of literature, the very first image of psychopaths and psycho-killers with antisocial personality disorders are male characters or monstrous figures. For centuries, women were never rendered to be these maleficent serial killers since women have always been cast as the victims or the inferior characters in stories. In general, when it comes to literary representations, male characters have always been portrayed as heroes or villains as they are presumed to be mentality, physically, and emotionally superior to women (Özgenalp, 2006, p. 19). On the other hand, female characters have always been portrayed as victims or la femme fatales whose main purpose is to seduce and distract the hero from his main quest. Özgenalp (2006) argues that, in postmodern films and literary works, female characters have challenged the traditionally established character limitations, where women are portrayed as monsters who "hold power but that power is classified as dark, evil, and extraordinary" (p. 9).

Dangerous mentally disturbed female characters stand as figures of danger, freedom, and unexpected behaviours. In Victorian literature, when female characters kill, their victims tend to be their lovers, husbands, or their children since their crimes tend to always be domestic in nature (Morris, 2014, p. 1). Violent crimes committed by female characters are always associated with motives rather than unexpected acts or unjustified reasonings; readers tend to understand and acknowledge the reasons behind the crimes committed by female characters. Although contemporary literature stands to counter the

traditional female psychopaths, even today's literature still struggles with the idea of female killing. An interesting example is the character Adam Dalgliesh in *The Private Patient* (2008) by the contemporary English author, P. D. James (1920-2014), whereby he refers to his killer as a "he or Noctis" (p. 203) even though, in the end, the killer is no other than a female character named Candace Westhall.

3. Textual Analysis:

3.1 Female Psychopathy in *London Fields*

London Fields centres around "the repulsive, yet strangely intriguing protagonist [Nicola]" (Gwóźdź, 2017, p. 285). It was not only Nicola's characters that has created a massive controversy but also Amis' depiction of London as a "virtuoso depiction of a wild and lustful society" (Pesetsky, 1990). Nicola's character, according to Brook (2006), symbolises Amis' "[m]isogynistic characters' predilections, which range from pornography and erotic underwear to rape as well as the passive victim of male violence" (p. 87). Although different studies have proposed Nicola as the victim of her murder plot, our study suggests the opposite, that Nicola is far from being the victim, she is in fact the mastermind behind her murder and the destruction of all other characters; "This is a story of a murder. It hasn't happened yet. But it will. (It had better) I know the murderer, I know the Murderee. I know the time; I know the place. I know the motive 'her motive'" (Amis, 1989, p. 4). When Nicola is first introduced to the readers, she is introduced as the "tall, dark, and thirty-four murderee" (Amis, 1989, p. 13). It is then indicated that Nicola is not a normal woman but rather a woman with a special power of "always knew what was going to happen next. Not all the time (the gift was not obsessively consulted), and not every little detail" (Amis, 1989, p. 13).

One of the key elements in a psychopathic character is their exposure to "stressful life events in childhood […] shown to increase the risk for psychopathy" (Weizmann-Henelius et al., 2003, p. 47). In the case of Nicola, being a lonely child with a special gift comes with its cost, she keeps herself isolated and alone; "But little Nicola, immersed in a romantic thought and perfectly happy with Enola" (Amis, 1989, p. 13). Although it has been posited that Nicola has special powers of knowing the future, yet Nicola is also known for being a pathological liar. When she was a little girl, she had a childhood friend whose name was Enola, yet Enola did not exist. In fact, "Enola came from inside the head of Nicola Six" (Amis, 1989, p. 13). Nicola also suffers the misfortune of losing her parents at a young age; "She didn't want to come along because she knows that the afternoon will end in disaster, in blood and iodine and tears. And so, it proves" (Amis, 1989, p.13). When Nicola loses her parents, she displays no emotion and no care for her loss, Nicola lacks empathy and sympathy for anyone even for her own family; "They both died, anyways, together, as she had always known they would. So why hate them [Nicola's parents]? So why love them?" (Amis, 1989, p. 13). Although Nicola has always known what would happen to her parents and their eventual accident, she never tries to warn them or save them which is the logical reaction of a logical individual; yet, when she hears the news of their death she drives to the airport and spends the night in a VIP bar with old men drinking all night; "After she got the call she drove reflexively to the airport. The car itself was like a tunnel of cold wind" (Amis, 1989, p. 13).

One of the key differences between male and female psychopaths is their style of violence and aggression. It was found that "psychopathic men are more prone to use physical violence than psychopathic women. Men's aggression is thought to be more externalising whereas women's aggression is thought to be more internalising" (Wennberg, 2013, p. 7). When Nicola was nineteen and suffered the weight of losing her parents all while having the previous knowledge of their deaths, she acted destructively and aggressively but only toward herself at first. On the night of her parent's untimely death, she spends the night in the company of an "unforgivable pilot" (Amis, 1989, p. 13) just having sexual intercourse; "that night she had acrobatic sex" (Amis, 1989, p. 13). According to Hare (2003), sexuality and sexual affairs are normally associated with female psychopaths as they tend to use their attractiveness to their advantage. In Nicola's case, when she was young, she was not seen as attractive; "Nicola was not yet beautiful [when she was a teenager]" (Amis, 1989, p. 13) but, when she became older, she used her beauty to manipulate and abuse men. Indeed, two of Hare's psychopathic tendencies are promiscuous sexual behaviours and many short-term relationships and Nicola possesses both tendencies especially when she becomes older, prettier, and sexually active; "The typical Nicola romance would end, near the doorway of her attic flat,

with the man of the moment sprinting down the passage, his trousers round his knees, a ripped jacket thrown over his ripped shirt, and hotly followed by Nicola herself" (Amis, 1989, p. 14).

Alongside Nicola's short-term relationships and her sexual adventures, she also suffers from substance abuse and poor behavioral control. From a young age, she started drinking alcohol semiregularly but then drinking became part of her daily routine; "Nicola drank a very great deal" (Amis, 1989, p. 14). Hare (1993) highlights that there is a correlation between antisocial disorders and substance use as they "frequently co-occur in psychiatric patients" (p. 169). Hare also highlights that these traditionally psychopathic characteristics, such as a "chronically unstable and antisocial lifestyle" (Harpur et al., 1988) and "conduct problems" (Livesley & Schroeder, 1991) are associated with substance and alcohol abuse. Nicola's drinking habits were becoming more serious and uncontrollable, and it has left her depressed, alone, and aggressive toward herself and others.

She would frequently stick to the new regime right up to and certainly including the whisky or digestif before bedtime the following day. By then, bedtime looked a long way off. There was always a lot of shouting and fist fighting to do before bedtime […] Did Nicola Six drink alone? Yes, she drank alone. (Amis, 1989, p.14)

Nicola's persona has always been associated with *superficial charm and shallow effect* since she was deemed beautiful and sexually adventurous. Hare's PCL-R highlights the importance of self-image to psychopaths since psychopaths tend to be attractive and shallow. Nicola has always been described in a pornographic design setting an extreme standard for her beauty and self-image "Her [Nicola] mouth was full and unusually wide. Her mother had always said it was a whore's mouth. It seemed to have an extra half-inch at either wing, like the mouth of the clown girl in pornography" (Amis, 1989, p.15).

According to Hare (1993), psychopaths and psychopathic killers are not mad in nature; their actions are not the result of madness but rather from a "cold, calculating rationality combined with a chilling inability to treat others as thinking, feeling human beings" (p. 5). Furthermore, Hare also notes that, although psychopaths lack remorse or empathy for others, many psychopaths have managed to live without "murdering people" (1993, p. 5). In the novel, Nicola is fully aware of her death; she seems to react coldly and insensibly; "Dressed for death, she called her black cab and drank two cups of black coffee and tasted hunger the black tobacco of a French cigarette" (Amis, 1989, p.16). When she first goes to the Black Cross pub, she is sure that her murderer would be there waiting for her; "With intense recognition, that she had found him, her murderer" (Amis, 1989, p. 17). After meeting her future killer, her immediate reaction is to leave the pub and walk to her flat to write in her diary her final entry. Nicola starts calculating and manipulating others to plan her murder; "Maybe they both needed him, as a kind of fuel" (Amis, 1989, p. 18). Rationally, it might seem that Nicola's plan to fast-forward her death might seem unreasonable; however, her behaviour fits into a view by Hare; that psychopaths are extremely rational individuals with high awareness since "their behaviors is the result of choice and freely exercised" (1993, p. 22). Nicola's future murder might seem illogical to readers but, to her, it makes perfect sense since, according to Hare, psychopaths are not deemed or judged by the same standard as others with mental issues. Hare highlights that a person with mental illness could commit a crime and be judged for the reason of insanity; yet, when a psychopath commits a crime and breaks the same rules "he or she is judged sane" (Hare, 1993, p. 22) Thus, according to Hare, Nicola's antisocial psychopathic actions and deemed sane and reasonable.

Hare (1993) highlights that manipulation and exceptional charm are two characteristics that are more obvious in all psychopaths alongside "considerable social skills" (p. 27). Nicola's beauty and sensual appearance give her a sense of power and control; "Now Guy moved into her force field. Intensely he confirmed the line of dark down above her mouth" (Amis, 1989, p. 27). It was very easy for Nicola to manipulate and control men around her since she was "extraordinary" (Amis, 1989, p. 27) where all three men want her and want to be with her which make it very easy for Nicola to move forward with her plans. Hare (1993) also underlines that psychopaths are "experts at distorting and molding the truth to suit their purpose. Impression management is definitely one of their strong suits" (p. 30). Hare emphasises the psychopaths' abilities to manipulate and lie since they are known for re-adjusting facts to better match their narrative. In Nicola's case, it is very challenging to differentiate the truth since she has different stories with different personalities, where each of the three men know Nicola differently and it is nearly impossible to uncover Nicola's true intentions. On the first meeting

between Nicola and Keith, it is very clear that Nicola does not care much about Keith, and she is simply using him for her good; "If it had occurred to Keith that Nicola was waiting for him or leading him on, that he was included in any design of hers, he would have dismissed the idea" (Amis, 1989, p. 31). Even when Keith suspects that Nicola is simply playing with him, he does not mind it because; "For a brief passage of time Keith had the odd idea that Nicola was watching him; and that couldn't be right, because Keith was watching Nicola, and Nicola hadn't turned. Something tugged him. She's leading me [Keith] on, he thought and started following her" (Amis, 1989, p. 31). Nicola has so much power over Keith that, ever since their first meeting, he does not stop obsessing over Nicola and he thinks of her all the time:

In the days after their first meeting, the image of Nicola Six began to work on Keith's mind. It worked like television. He thought of her often while inspecting a shop window in Oxford Street, while baring after his scattered urges in the last moments before sleep, while finishing himself off with Trish Shirt. Although many of these thoughts were frankly pornographic. (Amis, 1989, p. 38)

Psychopaths are very intelligent and articulate in nature; they are entertaining conversationalists and always amusing to others. Even though they are antisocial individuals, they display convincing gifts for storytelling and clever comebacks. According to Hare (1993), psychopaths are very effective individuals in masking themselves as "likable and charming" (p. 35) and, for others, psychopaths might seem "too slick and smooth, too obviously insincere and superficial […] psychopaths are play-acting. Mechanically 'reading their lines'" (p. 35). Nicola is charming and intelligent in nature; however, with her beauty and wit, she can control everything and everyone around her. Her first interaction with Keith is very surreal in nature since Nicola is presenting in an overly sexualised theatrical style; "Nicola's legs, he [Keith] saw, were set combatively apart, and the last button of her dress was unfastened. Nicola's dress: Keith had been intending, at an early stage in their encounter, to ram his hand up it. But not now, he thought. No way" (Amis, 1989, p. 40). It is not just Keith who is under Nicola's spell, Samon, another male character, is also led and controlled by Nicola without his knowledge; "Her body had after all been recklessly adored, every inch of it. Even her secretions, even her waste, even her dust were adorable. She smelled of tragic sleep and tobacco. Not cigarette smoke but tobacco – moistly dark" (Amis, 1989, p. 42). Nicola is a powerful woman and she understands her powers early on. The men in her life also recognise her power and the effect of her presence on them; "What saddened and incensed her was the abdication of power, so craven, the surrender […] and power was what she was in it for" (Amis, 1989, p. 46).

Hare's psychopathic checklist highlights egocentric and grandiose as the most noticeable characteristic of psychopathy since "psychopaths have a narcissistic and grossly inflated view of their self-worth and importance, truly astounding egocentricity and sense of entitlement" (Hare, 1993, p. 38). Hare (1993) also notes that psychopaths tend to see themselves as the main characters and the centre of the universe; for them, they are no ordinary people but rather superior to others and, because of this superior ideology, they tend to justify their lives and actions according to their own rules. Nicola views herself in the same manner as the main character in everyone's story; thus, in her mind, she is worldly and entitled to everything and everyone; "When Nicola walked the streets she was lit by her personal cinematographer, nothing too arty either, a single spotlight trained from the gods" (Amis, 1989, p. 47). Here, Nicola believes that she is entitled to Keith's attention and time, Samon's skills and affection for herself, and Guy's wealth and love at the same time. Nicola describes herself as a universal creature; "That's what I am, she used to whisper to herself after sex. A black hole. Nothing can escape from me" (Amis, 1989, p. 45). Nicola's narcissistic self is so grand that she decides to play God for her own life; "Her life had a plan B" (Amis, 1989, p. 45) as she planned. Even other characters in the novel appear to view Nicola in a worldly way; when Nicola is walking the streets, men from all ages gaze at her until she disappears. In one incident, a boy approaches her while walking and this transpires; "'Miss World' he said in a quavering voice. He wore an expression of ironic entreaty 'give us a smile. Please'" (Amis, 1989, p. 47).

More significantly, psychopaths are frequently perceived as proud, brazen boasters, confident, opinionated, controlling, and cocky. They seem unable to accept that other individuals have genuine beliefs that differ from their own and like having authority over others. To some, they seem "electrifying" or charismatic. Even though psychopaths frequently assert that they have clear objectives, they demonstrate little comprehension of the necessary requirements; given their history and

lack of enduring interest in learning, they have little to no possibility of achieving their goals (Hare, 1993, pp. 38-39). Nicola's image for herself is beyond grand that she pictures herself being in a relationship with God himself to the point that God is in love with her yet, still, she rejects him:

And so often found herself imagining that she was going out with God. Or not going out with Him – not anymore. He had slept with her once, and once only: she did that to show Him what he would be missing forever and ever. In bed Nicola had made him do the act of double darkness […] He wanted to marry her and have her come and live at His place: in heaven. All this could be achieved at the speed of light. God said He would fix it so she lived forever. Nicola told Him to get lost. (Amis, 1989, pp. 79-80)

Psychopaths have a low regard for the terrible consequences of their behaviour for other people. Frequently, they are honest about the situation, expressing that they feel no guilt, that they are not sorry for the suffering and devastation they have caused, and that they have no cause for concern. According to Hare (1993), psychopaths exhibit "lack of remorse or guilt" since, to them, their actions are justified and reasonable no matter the outcome and the consequences (p. 40). Furthermore, Hare notes that psychopaths tend to "verbalise remorse but then contradict themselves in words or actions" (1993, p. 41). Similarly, in the novel, Nicola sometimes talks about remorse and feelings of shame or guilt yet her actions prove otherwise:

Although Nicola liked doing what nobody else did, although she liked danger, she didn't like that kind of danger, vandal danger, with no form to it. She was promiscuous, but her lovers weren't (they usually have wives instead) (Amis, 1989, p. 46).

Although, at first, she acknowledges that having an affair with a married man might be something that she is not interested in yet, later, she contradicts herself and has an affair with Keith and Guy who are both married, and several married men throughout her life with no guilt or remorse. Even after learning that Guy is a married man and the idea of cheating torments him, she still chooses to meet him in private and ask him for a favour; "Guy would call the day after next. She would arrange to meet him in the park. She would choose a cold day so that she could wear her blond fur coat. Beneath that, at least, she would be able to keep some entertaining secrets" (Amis, 1989, p. 51). Hare (1993) adds that many psychopaths display an inability to "construct a mental and emotional facsimile of another person" (p. 44). In fact, psychopaths are known for their lack of empathy and remorse. Hare notes that psychopaths seem to be unable to "get into the skin or to walk in the shoes of others" (1993, p. 44) and psychopathic individuals observe people and emotions in a shallow manner unlike normal people. In the novel, Guy is truly in love with Nicola as he believes that she loves him in the same way; when Keith asks Guy about Nicola, Guy becomes irritated and denies Keith's comments regarding Nicola as a wanton woman; "She's not like that" (Amis, 1989, p. 73). Nicola, on the other hand, does not love or care about Guy the same way; when Simon asks her to cancel her death plans and; "[d]o something else, Live" (Amis, 1989, p. 78), she rejects the idea and says that she will continue using Guy for her plans:

'Has Guy been here Yet?' 'No, soon. It's the next but one thing. I am going to speed things up. Massive escalation.' 'Do you really need Guy? Couldn't you just edit him out?' […] 'I agree it's a drag in a way but I do need him. Keith can't do it alone. There's not enough in him' (Amis, 1989, p. 78).

It has already been argued that Nicola possesses a strong ability to manipulate and deceive people around her, which fits into a view by Hare (1993); that "psychopaths appear amazingly unfazed by the possibility or even by the certainty of being found out" (p. 46). When Nicola meets Guy at the park for the first time, she "[m]aintain an actress's discipline: it was like the fifteenth rehearsal with some dud leading man who kept on flubbing his lines" (Amis, 1989, p. 80). Nicola's personality and conversations are carefully constructed to manipulate and deceive men; therefore, it is very challenging and nearly impossible to make sense of Nicola's true personality. Hare (1993) also notes that psychopaths tend to reword facts and truths so they can be coherent with the lies; thus, psychopaths' conversions tend to be the "result of serious contradictory statements" (p. 46). Individuals with a high percentage of psychopathy seem to be "proud of their ability to lie" (Hare, 1993, p. 47); psychopaths are so good at lying and manipulating that sometimes they are "unaware that they're lying; it is as if the words take a life of their own, unfettered by the speaker's knowledge that the observer is aware of the facts" (Hare, 1993, p. 47). Nicola mentions to Guy that she "not very often go out into the world" (Amis, 1989, p. 81) which is a very

deceitful claim since she is the opposite. Given that it is in the nature of psychopaths to lie, therefore, it is not very surprising that individuals with high levels of psychopathy tend to cheat, defraud, manipulate, and con people without having the slimmest reluctance about doing so. Psychopaths tend to describe themselves as "con men, hustlers, or fraud artists. Their statements often reveal their belief that the world is made up of 'givers and takers, predators and prey, and that it would be very foolish not to exploit the weaknesses of others" (Hare, 1993, p. 49). This view matches Nicola's meeting with Guy perfectly since Nicola only sees Guy as easy prey and a fool; therefore, it is only reasonable that she takes full advantage. After her meeting with Guy, Nicola has had enough and she makes her "fake impulsive swivel and give that second vague wave goodbye" (Amis, 1989, p. 80); the moment she goes home she becomes yet another self of Nicola.

More importantly, Hare (1993) underlines psychopaths' emotional poverty since they lack the depth of emotions as they appear to be "cold and unemotional, they are prone to dramatic, shallow and short-lived display of feelings" (p. 52). Psychopaths, in nature, are very intelligent and observant; therefore, they prefer to carefully observe others and "play-acting with the little going on below the surface" (Hare, 1993, p. 52). In the novel, Nicola's interaction with Guy acts like a scene from a play rather than a real conversation between two adults, especially since Nicola is only playing a role; "The alcohol and the conversation combined to assist Nicola in her next project, which was to start crying" (Amis, 1989, p. 82). Nicola goes on to remember her years studying method acting and how she was taught to cry on the spot which she gladly uses against Guy; she plays the role of the weak and innocent lady in distress; "'You're crying', he [Guy] said joyfully. Help me [Nicola]. I'm so terribly alone. Please help me'" (Amis, 1989, p. 82). Nicola doesn't have any feelings for Guy, he is simply "the fool, the poor foal: Guy the fall guy" (Amis, 1989, p. 83).

One day later, Nicola meets Keith at her house and she prepares for her performance. Like always, she wears her favourite bikini then she slips her white heels near her bed and comes down to meet Keith feeling like "a chorus girl, like a horse, like a cartoon" (Amis, 1989, p. 85). Nicola hands Keith a book and money while he is leaving; "You don't have to do anything with them, they're props. They're just props" (Amis, 1989, p. 85). Her meeting with Keith and handing over the books and money are just part of her lies, part of her stage performance for Guy when he came to her unit upon her invitation. Other psychologists, such as J. H. Johns and H. C. Quary, express that psychopaths' understanding of emotions is like "knowing the words but not the music" (Hare, 1993, p. 53), which is to say that emotions and feelings, to psychopaths, are very shallow that they act as "proto-emotions: a primitive response to immediate needs" (Hare, 1993, p. 53). As seen in the novel, Nicola's feelings and emotions are only constructed on her needs just after spending "a good fifteen minutes" (Amis, 1989, p. 86) with Keith she rushes to her bedroom and changes her outfit from her bikini to a white cotton dress for Guy; "Always the simulacrum, never the real thing. That's art. Nicola emerged from the bedroom in a subtle hobble, patting her hair with one hand and limply fanning herself with the other" (Amis, 1989, p. 86). Here, Hare (1993) explains that non-psychopaths tend to experience fear and pain since "most people, the fear produced by threats of pain and punishment which is an unpleasant emotion and a powerful motivator of behavior, fear keeps us from doing some things" (p. 54). In Nicola's case, fear of pain and punishment is not the primary motivator since she does not seem to fear the consequences of her actions; when Guy suspiciously catches her with Keith, her reaction is simply to fabricate a lie in her mind; "Even if she got pregnant, she could spin him the line about immaculate conception. God did it. It was God's […] Nicola had been looking forward to the series of good expressions with which she would have greeted his jealous bafflement" (Amis, 1989, pp. 86-87).

Psychopaths, such as Nicola, feel free to satisfy their needs and exercise their freedom thinking that they will get away with everything; to push Guy even further, she decides to send him a letter telling him that "by now one has grown so used to this devastating solitude" (Amis, 1989, p. 128). Meanwhile, she is fully aware of Guy's reaction with her wicked intentions in mind; "to see what was in him [his dream and dreads, the graphs and spools of his nocturnal erections] and find out what move to murder" (Amis, 1989, p. 132). What matters most to Nicola is not the consideration and the wellbeing of others; rather, seeing her treacherous plan work by pushing someone to the edge enough to murder her. Nicola has never even considered the effects and the aftermath of her murder plan to others, and how her murderer will suffer the consequences of her actions, she simply does not care; "She welcomed and applauded the death of just about anything. It was company." (Amis, 1989, p. 191).

4. CONCLUSION

Female psychopaths exist despite the psychologically sexist diagnosis; they exist in society, prison, and in literature, they use social expectations for their advantage all while breaking the traditional limitations set upon them. With regards to the first objective of the study, namely to explore the notion of female psychopathy through its female protagonist, Nicola stands as an example of a contemporary representation of a mentality-disturbed female character that upholds her femininity all while using her beauty and intelligence to abuse and control others. Nicola displays her psychopathic nature at an early age by utilising her beauty and intelligence to control all men in her life for her own design.

The second objective is to examine the degrees of psychopathy and antisocial disorder symptoms reflected through Nicola's diverse psychopathic manifestations by applying Hare's PCL-R. After careful examination, it is determined that Nicola embodies both the two "personality traits" and "antisocial" factors listed in the psychopathic checklist, namely criminal versatility, pathological lying, conning and manipulation, lack of remorse or guilt, lack of empathy, failure to accept responsibility for own actions, impulsivity, irresponsibility, poor behavioural control, early behavioural problems, promiscuous sexual behaviour, superficial charm and shallow affect, egocentric and grandiose, and many short-term marital relationships as outlined by Hare (1991). In future studies, a comparative study between Nicola with selected psychopathic female characters can be conducted with findings from this study by applying Hare's PCL-R checklist. Also, an analysis of psychopathic female figures can be conducted by employing Hare's theory of the psychopath at work which explores a modern examination of female psychopaths as working and functioning individuals in society.

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