



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

English Literature

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF AESTHETICS IN CREATING HARMONY IN VIJAY NALLAWALA'S A BIPOLAR'S JOURNEY FROM TORMENT TO FULFILLMENT

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ABSTRACT

The paper analyzes how aesthetics (beauty and artistic expression) relate to mental health and personal identity in Vijay Nallawala's autobiographical writing. It investigates how aesthetics help individuals find balance and harmony in their lives, especially when dealing with mental illness. The research aligns with critical theories of normalcy, such as those by Foucault, Deleuze, and Guattari, emphasizing how societal norms influence perceptions of mental health and identity. The paper critiques the normalization processes in society that define and confine individuals with mental illnesses, framing them within a system of control and marginalization. The study uses a literary and philosophical analysis to dissect the themes in Nallawala's book. It references works of critical theorists and integrates their ideas with Nallawala's narrative to explore the broader implications of mental illness and societal norms. The paper concludes that aesthetics play a crucial role in helping individuals, particularly those with mental illnesses, to reclaim their identity and find harmony. It suggests that literature and art provide tools for self-expression and resistance against societal norms that stigmatize mental illness. It highlights the importance of creating supportive communities and spaces for open discussion about mental health to combat stigma and foster understanding.

Lois Mc Nay in his text *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (2013) expounds on the category of the delinquent and sets up divisions between the normal and the unusual, the legitimate and the illicit, which ensnare the subject inside a set of normalizing presumptions. These normalizing presumptions are reflected within the points of the modern penal framework, which isn't basically to judge the truth of a wrongdoing but to decide the reasons for a wrongdoing, why it happened and how the guilty party can be restored. Consideration is progressively paid to the person, subtle elements of each case and how they can be adjusted or destroyed most successfully. The brain research of the person criminal is put beneath examination: deliberate instead of transgression gets to be the central model of blame. In Foucault's words: 'the sentence that condemns or vindicates isn't basically a judgment of blame, a legitimate choice that lays down discipline: it bears inside it an evaluation of ordinariness and specialized medicine for a conceivable normalization. Nowadays the judge – officer and attendant – certainly does more than judge.'

Further Mc Nay (2013) argues, the related processes of individualization and totalization, which operate through modern power, involve extracting the "truth" from each individual through a variety of disciplinary means and then incorporating it into normalizing knowledge structures that obscure uniqueness and confine it to a narrow range of prescribed patterns. This is consistent with Foucault's theory that an individual is both bound to their own identity by a conscience or self-awareness and subject to another person via control and reliance. In Vijay Nallawala's book, *A Bipolar's Journey from Torment to Fulfillment* (2015) narrator finds himself entrapped in a family situation, where the family members using its various disciplinary tools, try to comprehend why he wants to quit the family business and start something of his own.

It took some deliberation and one Saturday I managed to muster the courage and said to him, "I want to quit the business and start something on my own." He just could not believe what I was saying. The next day a family meeting was called at Mama's home to address the issue... The calm before the storm lulls one into complacency. Here was the unsuspecting me, suddenly being asked which business was I planning to begin? My answer was defiant and vague. "Printing", I blurted out ... "Do you have a business plan? Do you know what goes into setting up a printing press? Do you

have any idea how competitive this world is?" I was like a paper boat being tossed around in rough seas. (47)

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their seminal text *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1998) emphasize that social reality is mediated to children by families; if the social reality in question is full of alienated social forms, then this alienation will be mediated to the individual child and experienced as estrangement in the family relationships. It is necessary to comprehend the fundamental tenet of antipsychiatry—namely, the identity that exists between mental and social alienation. For it is to the degree that the family-microcosm, the family-social-indicator, communicates social distance that it is accepted to "organize" mental estrangement within the intellect of its claim individuals or its insane part. (And among all the individuals, who is the genuine maniacal?)

Eric Cassell in his work, *The Nature of Suffering and the Goals of Medicine* (2023) expounds that a person is more than their mind, their spirit, or their subjective knowledge. Ignorance of the numerous elements of personhood actively adds to the suffering of sufferers. It is necessary to reject the traditional dualism of mind and body in order to comprehend the role of the individual in human sickness. Cassell further interrogates that what we refer to as depression, in large part, is just unrelieved suffering? The possibility exists because depression frequently follows the death of a loved one, setbacks in one's career, protracted illness, severe harm to one's self-esteem, and other harms to one's personality. Taking into consideration the aforementioned characteristics of personhood, keep in mind that each is jeopardized or impaired in severe disease. Therefore, it should not be surprising that chronic illness often follows suffering. Vijay Nallawala (2015) in his book similarly writes of one such event of grandpa passing away.

Grandpa had passed away. Everyone was waiting for me at Vasai so that the last rites could be performed. I was shaken by the news and there was this dilemma: I asked my client that considering the emergency, could I be excused? "You have been rehearsing with us all day and know the sequence perfectly. Do you think your crew can now step in and pull off the show?" ...After being torn apart by indecision, with a heavy heart, I decided to stay put. My mind was in turmoil, but I needed to focus and concentrate. Early next day I left for Vasai. I was a social outcast- nobody was willing to see that it

was not a question of putting business ahead of family obligations. (52)

Sari Altschuler et al, in their text *Keywords for Health Humanities* (2023) explicate that even while health equality has stagnated, we observed with great curiosity that many in the medical community and the general public looked to the humanities to comprehend a new threat to global human health when the pandemic struck. Literature and history became vital tools for comprehending the world tragedy and adjusting to our new reality, particularly since they taught us about the xenophobic and racist aspects of previous pandemics. Similarly, ethicists became indispensable specialists as hospitals prepared for shortages of personnel, ventilators, beds, and eventually vaccines and treatments that would force patients to make life-or-death decisions regarding their care, thereby worsening the pandemic's effects on communities of color and people with disabilities.

M. Julie Aultman, et al. in their text *Health Humanities Reader* (2014) suggests literary theorists such as Kenneth Burke have long acknowledged the healing and therapeutic powers of literature and other relics of creative cultural activity. Burke claims that reading might provide us with a "allopathic strategy of cure" and "immunize us by stylistically infecting us with the disease." Scholars in the health humanities apply this understanding of literature's healing and immunizing abilities to the field of medicine. They consider literature to be an essential supplement to science and evidence-based medicine. Beyond providing protection and soul-healing, literature and the arts also produce the insights that are a vital social addition to medical, allowing us to go beyond therapy and toward recovery. The health humanities incorporate ideas of language, ethics, embodiment, and power that have emerged from an engagement with literature and representation, in addition to creative fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and other "texts." Representing patients' perspectives on sickness, disability, and medical care is a crucial role that these texts play in health professions education and practice. Similarly, in Vijay's novel the narrator finds an escape in the arts during his illness.

It wasn't that I was always sullen or depressed – it was just that I was not passionate about anything. Anything except art, of course. Yes, when it came to drawing or painting, I would be totally immersed. Art brought out my soul, my 'Aha' for sure... By then I had got hooked to reading. Pretty soon I was a book worm and this came at the cost of my studies. Why bother mugging up boring textbooks when these wonderful stories take me to exciting new worlds? (22)

Arthur W. Frank in his text *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (2013) marvels at what motivates someone like Alsop, Radner, or Broyard to dedicate their final months of life and energy to writing about illness? These people could have found camaraderie or entertainment in any other way, but they chose to write. Why did Lorde dedicate her time to writing just after her mastectomy? The tautological response is that the dyadic body's purpose is to reach out to others; it hopes to touch people and maybe influence how their tales are told. Further, the premise that "human beings tend to live too far within self-imposed limits" is how Cousins closes the chapter on William James. He uses his recovery process as an example of how anyone can go above and beyond these boundaries. Enhancing "the natural drive of the human mind and body toward perfectibility and regeneration" is at stake, in addition to a medical remedy. Preserving and honoring such instinctive desire might be the best use of human liberty." Automythology transforms the particular disease into a paradigm of shared problems and anxieties. Human potential—"freedom" for Cousins and "destiny" for Sacks—depends on whether the lessons the storyteller has learnt may be accepted and applied by others. The storyteller's body becomes a pivot point between microcosm

and macrocosm.

In conclusion, Humanities when combined with Aesthetics further generates integrity, continuity and harmony. As Thomas Aquinas explains in his *Summa Theologica* (1985) that art has all these features- integrity, continuity and harmony present which create an organic harmony. This organic harmony which is the nature of an art allows the subject to experience sublimity and beauty as explained by Immanuel Kant through his concept of noumenon, followed by S. T. Coleridge's idea of sublimity and John Keats' philosophy of Negative Capability and Egotistical Sublime and Martin Heidegger in his works, *The Origin of the Work of Art* (1998) and *Poetry, language, thought* (2001).

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