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Whitbread winner condemns Martin Amis call for euthanasia booths

Joan Brady accuses author of 'prostitution just to flog a book'

Caroline Davies guardian.co.uk, Monday 25 January 2010 23.30 GMT Article history



'How can a man prostitute himself like this?' ... Joan Brady. Photograph: Johan van Gorp

The novelist Joan Brady has accused her fellow writer Martin Amis of "flippancy" and "prostitution" over his controversial call for euthanasia "booths" on street corners where the elderly and demented can end their lives with "a martini and a medal".

US-born Brady, 70, the first woman to win the prestigious Whitbread book of the year award, told the Guardian: "Trivialising a subject of enormous magnitude just to flog a book? How can a man prostitute himself like this?"

Brady, whose husband died from a degenerative disease, added: "Amis's schoolboy flippancy leaves euthanasia proponents – serious people, thinking people – open to the attack that they understand nothing about death, that they see it as something out of a TV ad. Your head lolls to one side and it's over, all neat and tidy: a martini and a medal on a street corner, no need even to bother with closing credits."

She added: "I watched my husband drown. It took him a week. I heard people down the corridor from him screaming nonstop because of this day, there is nothing to take that much pain away."

"The first thing I did when my husband was dead was join Dignity in Dying and buy the book Final Exit. I think I know how to do it when the time comes. But suppose I have a stroke first. Suppose I'm hit by a bus and totally disabled. Suppose I can't do it my way. What then? Unless my GP is courageous as well as merciful, I'm all too likely to suffer – literally – the tortures of the damned."

Amis, 60, whose latest novel, The Pregnant Widow, is shortly to be published, drew criticism from anti-euthanasia organisations over remarks made in a Sunday Times interview in which he predicted a "silver tsunami" of ageing people, "like an invasion of terrible immigrants,

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stinking out the restaurants and cafes and shops".

He also ruminated on the potential death of his own talent, saying: "Novelists tend to go off at about 70".

But, said Brady: "As somebody who has just reached 70 – and still publishing – I'm tolerant, if not amused; interested, though, to know how far ahead he will move the cut-off date when he's my age."

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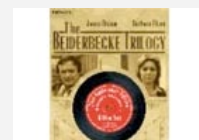
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