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**THE NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND
TEMPORAL EXPERIMENTS IN
MARTIN AMIS'S
*TIME'S ARROW AND LONDON FIELDS***

MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

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ABSTRACT

THE NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND TEMPORAL EXPERIMENTS OF MARTIN AMIS IN *TIME'S ARROW* AND *LONDON FIELDS*

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In the realm of contemporary literature, the narrative landscape continues to evolve, giving rise to an amalgamation of forms that challenge traditional storytelling conventions. In this context, the works of acclaimed British novelist Martin Amis stand out for his idiosyncratic style, which might be aptly described as a hybrid form of postmodernism. Characterized by its skepticism towards grand narratives, self-reflexivity, and bold experimentation with form and language, Amis's writing transcends traditional boundaries and embraces the multifaceted nature of the postmodern aesthetic. In this context, with a focus on Amis's groundbreaking novels *Time's Arrow* (1991) and *London Fields* (1989), this thesis embarks on a compelling exploration of his narrative strategies and temporal experiments within the framework of his distinct hybrid postmodernism. Through the analysis of these techniques, the thesis aims to shed light on the innovative techniques used and their implications for narrative construction and the boundaries of storytelling.

Key words: Martin Amis, postmodernism, *Time's Arrow*, *London Fields*, hybrid-postmodernism

ÖZET

MARTIN AMIS'İN *ZAMANIN OKU* VE *LONDRA TARLALARI* ROMANLARINDA ANLATI STRATEJİLERİ VE ZAMANSAL DENEYLER

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Çağdaş edebiyat alanında anlatı, yerleşik anlatı geleneklerine meydan okuyarak çeşitli biçimlerin kaynaşmasıyla sonuçlanan sürekli bir dönüşüm içindedir. Bu çerçevede, tanınmış İngiliz romancı Martin Amis'in eserleri, postmodernizmin melez bir biçimi olarak tanımlanabilecek kendine has tarzıyla öne çıkmaktadır. Üst anlatılara karşı şüpheciliği, özdüşünümselliği, biçim ve dil üzerine cesur deneyleriyle karakterize edilen Amis'in eserleri geleneksel sınırları aşmakta ve postmodern estetiğin çok yönlü doğasını yansıtmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Amis'in çığır açan *Zamanın Oku* ve *Londra Tarlaları* romanlarına odaklanan bu tez, Amis'in kendine özgü hibrit postmodernizmi çerçevesinde, bu romanlardaki anlatı stratejilerini ve zamansal deneylerini irdelemeye çalışacaktır. Bu çalışma, bu tekniklerin analizi yoluyla, kullanılan yenilikçi tekniklere ve bunların anlatı inşası ve hikaye anlatıcılığının sınırlarına etkilerine ışık tutmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Martin Amis, postmodernizm, *Zamanın Oku*, *Londra Tarlaları*, hibrit-postmodernizm.

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Minay Çiğdem Dereli

Gaziantep, 2023

OBITUARY: L'enfant Terrible

It is with deep sadness and a heavy heart that must be acknowledged the recent passing of Martin Amis, the “lurid chronicler of a whole generation” (The Economist). His departure has left a void in the literary world, evoking sentiments of grief and reflection among his readers, fellow writers, and scholars. Throughout his career, Martin Amis captivated readers with his innovative narrative strategies and bold style, his portrayal of modern infamies, human condition, and mediated reality has left an indelible mark on the landscape of British literature, inspiring countless authors and enriching the literary discourse. In the wake of Amis’s untimely demise, worlds of literature and politics have expressed their tributes to him. Salman Rushdie, in an article penned for the New Yorker, asserts that Amis possessed a distinct and unparalleled literary style, cautioning against any attempt to replicate it. Rushdie further expounded, stating that Amis aspired to create a “shelf of books”, enabling him to proclaim his voice (2023, para. 6). Although the vocalization of Amis has ceased, his acquaintances will deeply mourn his absence; however, they possess the shelf (Rushdie, 2023, para. 6). The former prime minister of United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, expressed his astonishment and sorrow regarding the passing of Martin Amis, whom he regarded as an exceptional satirist, possessing qualities of greatness, darkness (Barnett & Connolly, 2023, para. 11). According to Michal Shavit, Amis’s UK editor, the absence of Martin Amis from the literary world is difficult to conceive (Barnett & Connolly, 2023, para. 7). Amis has played a significant and influential role in shaping the literary experiences and creative development of numerous readers and writers throughout the past five decades. Each instance of his book being published was regarded as a significant occasion. Amis’s passing marks a turning point in the trajectory of British literature. His absence will undoubtedly be felt in the literary landscape, but it also opens up new avenues for critical examination and scholarly exploration. As we mourn his loss, we must also celebrate his enduring contributions, ensuring that his legacy continues to shape the way we perceive and understand the mastery of storytelling.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ÖZET	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Amis and Hybrid Postmodernism	2
1.2. Amis's Historical Consciousness and Realism: The Holocaust and Nuclear War	10

CHAPTER II

LONDON FIELDS (1989)

2.1. Narrative Strategies in <i>London Fields</i>	17
2.2. Temporal Experiments in <i>London Fields</i>	30
2.3. Hybrid Postmodernism of Martin Amis	37

CHAPTER III

TIME'S ARROW, OR, THE NATURE OF OFFENSE (1991)

3.1. Narrative Strategies in <i>Time's Arrow</i>	50
3.2. Temporal Experiments in <i>Time's Arrow</i>	66
3.3. Hybrid Postmodernism	73
CONCLUSION	81
References	88

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Martin Amis (1949-2023), one of the most well-known, influential, and controversial contemporary British writers, who was called as the bad boy of English letters, “the enfant terrible” (Topping, 2017), was born on August 25, 1949, in his own words, “four days before the Russians tested their first atom bomb, and *deterrence*¹ was at place. [...] the world had taken a turn for the worse” (1990, p. 1). This satiric tone in his approach to an event whose cataclysmic impacts affected a period in every respect would be the apex of his fiction. His father, Sir Kingsley Amis, was a practicing writer at the time and as a consequence writing has been “unmysterious to [Martin Amis] as a way of earning living” (Fuller, 1995). Throughout his career, Martin Amis wrote fifteen novels, seven short fictions, eight nonfictions, and two screenplays, one of which is the screen script of his renowned novel *London Fields* (1989). In 1971, he was admitted to Exeter College at Oxford University and graduated with a congratulatory first degree in English. After leaving Oxford, he became the literary editor of the *New Statesman*, where he worked with other notable literary figures such as Julian Barnes and Christopher Hitchens. From his debut novel *The Rachel Papers* (1973), which won him the Somerset Maugham Award like his father before him, to his latest autobiographical novel *Inside Story* (2020), Amis has kept his witty, satirical, and at times provocative voice in his cultural commentary. Amis’s work has been identified with various styles, in particular, postmodernism, satire, parody, comedy, and even pornography. He is from a generation who witnessed the periods of post-war era, Cold War, England under Thatcherism, and the great technological advances of the last century.

¹ Emphasis original.

Amis's personal life, on the other hand, furnished the notorious British tabloid journalism. In particular, his embroilment with his literary agent Pat Kavanagh, wife of his friend Julian Barnes, amidst the publication of his ninth novel *The Information* (1995) raised the attention of the media. According to Rachel Holland, since the media hype on the pre-publication of *The Information* (1995), Amis's persona has "rapidly replace[d] the content of his novels as the main selling point" (2019, p. 39). In fact, the main preoccupation of the very novel is with the authorial process and reputation, more specifically, "the contemporary phenomenon of literary celebrity" (Holland, 2019, p. 39). In an interview, Amis admitted that he had based his characters in the novel on himself (Fuller, 1995). Correspondingly, in *The Information* (1995) he writes "people are very interested in writers. Successful ones. More interested in the writers than the writing. In the writers' lives. For some reason." (Amis, 1995, p. 121). Amis's case as a writer has been similar. His controversial artistic style, coupled with the metaliterary media focus on his life, has caused ill-informed criticism at times. Although Amis's polished and virtuoso verbal play makes his novels entertaining, his revelling in morally disturbing topics such as pornography, Holocaust, nuclear weapons, incest, and rape creates confusion among critics.

1.1. Amis and Hybrid Postmodernism

In his monograph about Amis, Nick Bentley states that Amis's style "in many ways dovetails with the trajectory of British fiction over the last forty years generally, and a close look at his novels produces a yardstick with which to measure several key cultural debates and anxieties over the period" (2015, p. 1). In another critical work entitled *Contemporary British Fiction* (2008), Bentley defines the British novel in the contemporary period as the mixture of pre-war modernism and "English realist tradition that had been diverted by modernist experimentation" along with another "third category: postmodernism" (p. 30). Even though he has been regarded as one of the lead figures in postmodern fiction by many other critics along with Bentley, Amis has had an enigmatic relationship with postmodernism. In an interview with Mira Stout, he says he tried to "avoid of forms":

'The 19th century British novel was, if you like, a superpower novel. It was 800 pages long, about the whole of society. With decline, the novel has shrunk in confidence, in scope. In its current form, the typical English novel is 225 sanitized pages about the middle classes, You

know, 'wellmade' with the nice color scheme and decor, and matching imagery. I almost try and avoid form. What I'm interested in is trying to get more truthful about what it's like to be alive now.' (Stout, 1990, p. 35)

As a matter of fact, the term postmodernism is something of an enigma in itself. Postmodernism is undeniably a problematic concept in terms of definition. Nevertheless, it has figured in almost all academic disciplines and dominated humanities for a certain period in recent history, especially literary criticism, and contemporary fiction; therefore, it would be appropriate to briefly mention the theories about postmodernism and the socio-cultural/historical background in which it has emerged before examining Amis's relation to it.

Ever since its emergence in the 1960s as an architectural style, postmodernism has been attributed to manifold definitions without being assignable to a single one. In her oft-cited essay "One Culture and the New Sensibility" (1964), American writer and literary critic Susan Sontag claimed that postmodernism had been a new sensibility in literature that challenges "conventionally accepted boundaries [...] [and] also many established distinctions within the world of culture" (1964, p. 297). For theories of fiction, the definition of American postmodernism in literature manifests a certain consensus, relatively close to the definition given by Ihab Hassan in the 1960s. From early on Hassan wrote numerous critical works over the concept of postmodernism. In early 1970s, *American Scholar* published Hassan's "The Dismemberment of Orpheus" in which he offered a vision of the history of literature guided by a progressive distancing from language. In fact, he did not use the term postmodernism at the time, he used the word "indeterminacy" to elucidate "purposeless and indeterminate anti form" in modernism (Hassan, 1971, p. 480). However, later in 1977 in his postscript of the article, he offered a neologism "indetermanence" by combining the words "indeterminacy" and "immanence" to define the term postmodernism (Hassan, 1987, p. xiii). He writes:

As in scientific so in cultural thought, indeterminacy fills the space between the will to unmaking (dispersal, deconstruction, discontinuity, etc.) and its opposite, the integrative will. Cultural indeterminacy, however, reveals itself with greater cunning and valency; choice, pluralism, fragmentation, contingency, imagination is only a few of its ambiguous aspects, as I shall presently have occasion to show. (Hassan, 1987, p. 65)

In addition to literature and architecture, in the 1970s and 1980s postmodernism started to increase in popularity in other academic disciplines such as philosophy, history, and visual arts. For Bran Nicol, such a diverse usage of the term has made it even more difficult to identify:

[...] wide-ranging usage meant that the term became overloaded with meaning, chiefly because it was being used to describe characteristics of the social and political landscape as well as a whole range of different examples of cultural production. (Nicol, 2009, p. 1)

The gradual rise of postmodernism can undoubtedly be attributed to the destruction and trauma caused by the two major world wars. According to Tim DeJong, after the Great War, the modernist sensation persisted hope in the presence of all the grim impacts of the war and the unknowingness of the future that predominated the modernist stance (2020, p. 5). However, the outbreak of the Second World War caused the faith in the order to be restored withered away and brought surface that the uncertainty would be a permanent state for humanity. Germany and Italy's fascist regimes and the undoing they committed, the disclosure of Nazi concentration camps, and the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan made people sceptic about the authority. To put it simply "the grand narrative has lost its credibility" (Lyotard, 1984, p. 37). The French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, who is one of the major poststructuralists that has theorized and adopted postmodernism, begins *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984; original ed. 1979) with his highly influential definition of postmodernism: "incredulity towards metanarratives" (p. xxiv). For Lyotard, since the beginning of the WW2, the totalizing consensus that constitutes itself with reference to a legitimating ideology or grand narratives of any kind of rationalism such as Enlightenment and Marxism has been called into question (1984, p. 37). According to Hans Bertens, Lyotard has played a prominent role in merging the poststructuralist philosophy and the new sensibility in literary criticism:

[translation of *La Condition postmoderne* (1979)] seemed to many to signal a fully-fledged merger between an originally American postmodernism and French poststructuralism. Like poststructuralism, this postmodernism rejects the empirical idea that language can represent reality, that the world is accessible to us through language because its objects are mirrored in the language that we use. From this empirical point of view, language is transparent, a window on the world, and knowledge arises out of our direct experience of reality, undistorted, and not contaminated by language. (Bertens, 1994, p. 5)

Correspondingly, postmodern fiction in the 1970s and 1980s opposed traditional methods with the view that their tendency to represent reality in terms of mimesis implies dogmatic epistemology, which is a form of metanarrative, as Lyotard suggests.

The scepticism towards the existence of an interpretable world has prompted postmodern writers to interrogate the conventional plot of fiction that develops linearly in cause-and-effect relation. Since they no longer believe that reality is ultimate, they focus on reimagining them. Therefore, postmodern writers have tried to reconstruct totalizing truths that were once legitimized by grand narratives. As another postmodern French theorist Jean Baudrillard suggests, “the representation precedes the real thing” (2004, p. 365), if there is anything real left. In a similar attitude, Bran Nicol, in his critical work *Postmodern Fiction* (2009) defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards realism” (p. 19) a statement which he adopts from Lyotard. “Postmodernism, then, has two opposites: modernism and realism” (Bentley, 2008, p. 34). In her essay “Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism”, Amy J. Elias states that some novels that are categorized as postmodern such as Graham Swift’s *Waterland*, Julian Barnes *Flaubert’s Parrot*, and Martin Amis’s *Money* seem “straight” different from realism, they are “harder, more metafictional, *postmodern*”; however, these works seem “more *realistic* than – that of experimentalists” (1993, p. 9).² In fact, these works “blur the boundaries of realism and postmodernism” (1993, p. 9) which Elias defines as postmodern experimentalism. She builds her critical assumption on Brian McHale’s acclaimed distinction of epistemological dominant of modernism and ontological dominant of postmodernism. According to McHale, modernist fiction seeks the answers to the question “How can I interpret this world which I am a part? [...] What are the limits of the knowable?” (1987, p. 9) whereas for postmodernists, the case is no longer about knowing the world, it is the “*modes of being*”³, they engage with the questions:

Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it? What is a world? [...] What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode

² Emphasis original.

³ Emphasis original.

of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured? And so on. (McHale, 1987, p. 10)

To illustrate the ontological dominant of postmodernism, Elias states that in the bookstores next to Martin Amis's novels there might be other novels not only that are widely recognized as postmodern but also have realistic features (1993, p. 12). What makes these novels analogous is "their mimetic base: they attempt to reflect their own worlds" by blending mimesis and postmodern experimentalism which Elias has defined as "Postmodern Realism" (1993, p. 12). In this context, the veracity and credibility of Amis's writings are called into question due to their realist traits. Elias claims, however, that Realism itself has been a focal point of critical discourse for a considerable duration, frequently highlighting traditional realism's paradoxical nature (p. 17).

The tapestry of Amis's idiosyncratic realism intricately weaves together characters who embody the facades of modern autonomy, their very construction and exaggeration serving as a testament to his masterful portrayal of a dichotomous nature and their deliberate entanglement within a contrived narrative landscape. He said to Melvyn Bragg that "there is something artificial about the kind of dance they do with each other" (1989). In his essay, "Moronic Inferno", he claims that for twentieth century "even realism, rock-bottom realism is felt to be a bit grand" (1987, p.5). For him, the characters that have been at the forefront of the literary works in the twentieth century are often portrayed as being of a lower stature than the writers who have crafted them (Amis, p.5). Contemporary characters lack the archetypal qualities of heroism, tragedy, and romance that were once prevalent in literature, resulting in a diminished sense of character development. In accordance, Amis's literary personas display a unique array of traits that scrutinize the decline of the twentieth century from diverse perspectives and can be unsettling at times. The protagonist of his novel *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), John Self tells the author character Martin Amis that in a self-reflexive manner "We have a hero problem. We have a realism problem" (p. 221). Even postmodern techniques such as metafiction and irony, which Amis employs frequently, pose classification difficulties in his hands. Employing postmodernist techniques, coupled with a humorous and audacious use of language that is fitting for his contemporary era, Amis appears to be in pursuit of the fragments of vanished realism in a manner reminiscent of modernist

writers. Amis's literary approach bears resemblance to the tenets of postmodernism, where he skilfully combines diverse forms and genres to construct a narrative that reflects a world detached from its inherent reality. However, he endeavours to present a genuine depiction of this world in a manner that oscillates between tragedy and comedy, adopting a liminal stance that captures the complexities and contradictions of human existence. However, as Finney suggests it remains ambiguous whether Amis intends to convey the post-structuralist perspective that subjectivity is essentially a construction influenced by "the wider forces of the will to power and ideology" (2008, p. 111).

In the case of Amis's fiction and his relation to postmodernism, he resembles "the novelist at the crossroads" who is in between realistic conventions and modern experimentalism, as David Lodge suggests in his eponymous argument for his critical book (1971, pp. 32-34). However, for Amis it has been a multi-track line. In his biographical study of Amis, Gavin Keulks argues that Amis "blends elements from autobiography, realism, and fabulation to produce an amorphous, hybrid amalgamation that cannot be easily classified" (2003, p. 191). Similarly, in his critical review of Angus Wilson's fiction, Amis writes:

The contexts, the great forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sagas, have been exhausted; realism and experimentation have come and gone without seeming to point a way ahead. The contemporary writer, therefore, must combine these veins calling on the strengths of the Victorian novel together with the alienations of post-modernism. (Amis, 2001, p. 79).

In his review of *Mao II* (1991) by Don DeLillo, Amis made his most thumbnail appraisal of postmodernism:

Post-modernism in fiction was never a school or a movement, like symbolism or surrealism, and had none of the revolutionary trappings-- executive committees, special handshakes, manifestos cobbled together in cafes by ambitious young drunks. It was, instead, evolutionary: something that a lot of writers everywhere began finding themselves doing at roughly the same time. Even its exponents could see, in postmodernism, the potential for huge boredom. Why all the tricksiness and self-reflection? Why did writers stop telling stories and start going on about how they were telling them? Well, nowadays the world looks pretty post-modern in many of its aspects. It is equally fantastical and wised up, and image-management vies for pride of place with an uninnocent reality. Postmodernism may not have led anywhere much; but it was no false trail. (Amis, 1991a)

Ten years later, he stated in an interview that “postmodernism was a dead end, as it’s proved to be” (Reynolds and Noakes, 2003, p. 17), postmodern fiction was not a fashion or fad among the writers of the time as most people think it was, however, it completed its task on “the revolutionary path” (p. 17) in the history of fiction. Nevertheless, Amis has adopted a narrative that is widely associated with postmodern fiction, in particular, distorting the distinction between high and low culture, which has become a trademark of his style. Partly because it is a “term overloaded with meaning” (Nicol, 2009, p. 1), different scholars associated Amis with different aspects of postmodernism.

James Diedrick, in *Understanding Martin Amis* (1995) which is one of the most significant monographs on the novelist, suggests that Amis’s postmodernism has been influenced by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947). Long before Lyotard and even before postmodernism. In their magnum opus Adorno and Horkheimer argued that Enlightenment was praised for it had liberated reason from superstition; however, “it had been proven itself to be totalitarian” (1947, p.4). For Diedrick, this argument “is the seed from which postmodern theory grew” (1995, p. 11). He argues that Adorno and Horkheimer’s assertion that “the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity” (1947, p. 1) underpins Amis’s fiction because his postmodernism is not just aesthetical but also political, hence the two facets of the style are inseparable in Amis (1995, p. 11). In fact, Amis’s second novel *Dead Babies* (1975), has a direct reference to Theodor Adorno. An orphan character in the novel, Andy, “called himself Adorno after the German Marxist philosopher whose death had brought so much of despondence to the commune in the summer of 1972, when Andy was just a boy” (p. 179).

Critics have regarded his tours de force *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), and *The Information* (1995) as an informal trilogy, more specifically “London Trilogy” (Hawkes, 1997, p. 39; Keulks, 2006, p. 2). The consensus is that Amis’s aesthetic brilliance reaches its highest in these novels. For Hawkes, although Amis as a writer, who is one of the few writers that captures the Zeitgeist of 1980s England, creates his characters in the unconventional sense, they are indisputably familiar figures “drawn from real-life Britain [...] The disturbing thing about Amis’s characters is that they are extremely lifelike without being fully

human” (1997, p. 27). Jon Begley similarly argues that Amis’s fiction is a product of “home-grown tradition of postmodern writing” (2004, p. 79). In the 1980s under the Premiership of Margaret Thatcher, Britain went through dramatic monetary turnover, hence the cultural changes. In fact, the Reagan-Thatcher era shook the world's consensus in all areas. Additionally, the mass media, which contributes to social unrest, had a significant impact on how society was changing. In the face of this situation, British writers of the time anticipated that the prosperity brought by Thatcher's free market economy would not be long-term, and at the same time, a new era of social inequality and cultural anxiety would begin when the Thatcherism ended (Head, 2002, p. 30). Diedrick suggests that the narrator/protagonist of *Money* (1984), John Self, is embodiment of postmodern character with “his experiences of temporal confusion, psychic fragmentation, and anxiety” (1995, p. 75). Self is addicted to the twentieth century (Amis, 1984, p. 91). In an interview with John Haffenden, Amis states:

I do mean [John Self] to be a consumer, and he is consumed by consumerism, as all mere consumers are. I also mean him to be stupefied by having watched too much television – his life is without sustenance of any kind – and that is why he is so fooled by everyone. (Haffenden, 1985, p. 7)

Correspondingly, another memorable and highly postmodern character of Amis is Keith Talent in *London Fields*, has established his perspective of outside world on TV: “that tube burnt him, nuked him [...] TV that told him what the world was” (Amis, 1989, p. 55). Amis’s characters are epitomized form of Adorno and Horkheimer’s “moviegoer” and the world he has created in the trilogy is the illustration of what they called “the culture industry” (1947, p. 99). Despite different aspects of postmodernism have been attributed to each of Amis’s novels, almost every critic agrees that *London Fields* is the most postmodern of all in many respects. In addition to being one of the finest Amis novels that illustrates the culture of the twentieth century ruptured by late capitalism and nuclear warfare with its society who has lost touch with reality, it is also the novel in which he most densely employs postmodern literary devices such as metafiction, parody, irony, and intertextuality. Diedrick argues that Amis’s making use of these devices in so many layers is a reference to “literature suffering from exhaustion” (1995, p.159) in the way that the characters and the world has been exhausted from postmodernity.

1.2. Amis's Historical Consciousness and Realism: The Holocaust and Nuclear War

According to some critics, *Einstein's Monsters* (1987), *London Fields* (1989), and *Time's Arrow, Or The Nature of Offense* (1991)⁴ form another informal triptych in terms of employing apocalyptic and Holocaust narratives. In the "Introduction: Thinkability" of *Einstein's Monsters*, which also serves as an introductory of Amis's views on nuclear weapons and apocalypse, Amis states that his interest in nuclear warfare was started in 1984 (p. 5). Two years later in 1986, in an interview with Charles Michener, he says "we're all unwittingly and glandularly thinking about the nuclear threat" (reprint 1987, p. 110). Although *London Fields* is about nuclear apocalypse and *Time's Arrow* is about atrocities of Holocaust, they portray the same idea in that the two destructive "means to perform unthinkable" (Amis, 1987, p. 6). In fact, he considered titling *London Fields*, a post-apocalyptic novel mainly interested in the end of all things both inside and outside, as *Time's Arrow* (Amis, 1989, Note). In the same way, in his review of *Time's Arrow* John Updike argues that:

'Holocaust' has taken on two meanings in our time – nuclear war, which hasn't yet happened, and we hope it never will, and Nazi Germany's systematic murder of six million helpless European captives, most of them Jews. This Holocaust did happen, yet remains, like the other, unthinkable. (Updike, 1992, p. 86)

A recurring tendency is that the term postmodern is used to refer to sublimity which entails to presentation of the unrepresentable and indistinctness of the line between literal and fantasy. Brian Finney, in his essay "*Time's Arrow* and Postmodern Sublime", argues that *London Fields*, along with *Time's Arrow*, is postmodern in terms of Lyotardian postmodern sublime. According to Lyotard, sublimity is a "combination of pleasure and pain: the pleasure that reason should exceed all presentation, the pain that imagination or sensibility should not be equal to the concept", thus, postmodern artists, like a philosopher, govern their own rules and "impart a stronger sense of the unrepresentable" (1984, p. 81). For Finney, both of the novels depict pleasure and pain in both realistic and unrealistic levels (2006, p. 113).

Amis has generally not written on topics that might be considered as political; however, he has not remained unresponsive to the global turmoil and the events

⁴ The novel will be addressed briefly as *Time's Arrow* throughout the thesis.

affecting British society. Despite all the cynicism in his postmodern orientation, what sets Amis apart from other British postmodern writers is his attempt to draw attention to changing culture by illustrating it with his satiric and provoking style. His literary pursuits are motivated by his desire to direct attention to the issue of nuclear armament, which he perceives as a direct consequence of Enlightenment ideals and the era of modernity. Amis argues that the decline of the latter half of the twentieth century can be traced back to three pivotal events, namely, the emergence of Stalinism, the atrocities committed during the Holocaust, and the advent of nuclear weaponry which he regards “full of terrible news about what is to be human” (2002, p. 92). Through a range of literary creations, encompassing both fictional and non-fictional works most prominently including *Einstein's Monsters* (1987), *London Fields* (1989), *Time's Arrow* (1991), and *Koba The Dread* (2002), Amis endeavors to illuminate the complex interplay between Enlightenment ideals and the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

For Stokes, Amis's fiction is substantial and worthy of notice in this sense that it “offer[s] something other than a mere critique of the mediating effects of language” (1997, p. 300). In the afterword of *Time's Arrow*, Amis states that the subtitle of the book, which he calls the alternative title, *The Nature of Offence*, is a phrase from the Italian writer Primo Levi, who was one of the prisoners in the Auschwitz concentration camp and committed suicide in 1987. Amis writes, Levi's suicide was ironically a heroic act because “the offense was unique, not in its cruelty, nor in its cowardice, but in its style—in its combination of the atavistic and the modern. It was, at once, reptilian, and ‘logistical’” (1991b, p. 168). For Amis, the Holocaust is one of the most serious incidents of the twentieth century. Despite not engaging in an optimistic quest like the modernists, in a podcast with John Mullan, Amis asserts that moving the arrow in the opposite direction is the only way to put something that has been shattered back together (Guardian Book Club, 2010).

The main aim of this thesis is to evaluate and examine Martin Amis's postmodern narrative strategies in *London Fields* (1989) and his experimental and unconventional treatment of time in *Time's Arrow*, or, *The Nature of The Offense* (1991). The two novels in question have been chosen for the thesis not only because they both showcase Amis at the pinnacle of his stylistic and creative prowess, but also because they are complementary to each other. In his Note before the Preface to

London Fields, on the subject of choosing title for the novel he writes “Several alternatives suggested themselves. For a while I toyed with *Time’s Arrow*”. Eventually, two years after the publication of *London Fields*, he published *Time’s Arrow*. Even though Amis has not given up on his satirical and comic tone in either work, the fundamental concern of both novels is the social scepticism towards authority and cultural unsettlement from the beginning of the Second World War to the end of the twentieth century. The novels stand out as Amis’ best works of fiction for their intricate plots and being Amis’s melting pot of established and popular literary norms in a sarcastic way.

The Introduction of this thesis offers a concise yet comprehensive overview of postmodern theory and delves into Martin Amis’s adept utilization of postmodern methods in his literary works. The chapter explores various aspects, beginning with an examination of Amis’s position and attitudes within the realm of contemporary novels. Drawing comparisons with his contemporaries, the discussion delves into the distinctive elements that set Amis apart in terms of his writing style, themes, and narrative techniques. Moreover, the chapter delves into Amis’s political views, highlighting the ways in which his perspectives shape his literary output and contribute to the provocative and controversial nature of his discourses. Through a meticulous analysis, the chapter seeks to classify Amis within the broader context of postmodern literature, offering insights into the unique and captivating nature of his contributions to the literary landscape.

In Chapter II, the detailed analysis of Amis’s postmodernist and experimentalist narrative techniques and the trajectory of temporal experiments in the apocalyptic context and at the literary level he applied in his novel *London Fields* is followed. In this post-apocalyptic murder tale, Amis illustrates the atmosphere of gloom that has overtaken all living spaces and people of London in 1999. The end of the world is sensed in the exhaustion of characters who are powerless to alter this bleak, post-apocalyptic reality and lack motivation. The literary piece demonstrates Amis’s adeptness in crafting a melancholic and intricate plot that engrosses the readers into the depths of human depravity. The novel is set in a dystopian urban center of London and intricately interweaves the lives of its morally ambiguous characters through a complex network of deceit, desire, and imminent danger. Amis’ perceptive analysis of the deterioration of modern society, combined with his

incisive wit and linguistic expertise, make *London Fields* a captivating exploration of the human experience and the harmful forces that propel individuals towards their own downfall. The novel provides a striking portrayal of an urban area that is teetering on the brink of chaos, and acquaints its audience with enigmatic personages who reside within its confines. *London Fields* presents a poignant expedition that questions traditional ethical norms and endures as a significant contribution to modern-day literature. The chapter's primary concerns will be the problem of narrative authority and the novel's complex use of metafictional discourse. Other postmodern narrative techniques of Amis, including doubling, scene repetition, and irony will also be examined in this chapter.

To establish a theoretical framework, Chapter III will initially delve into Amis's unconventional narrative techniques and his temporal experiments. The subsequent analysis will focus on his meticulous utilization of retrograde chronology in *Time's Arrow*, offering a comprehensive examination of its narrative approach. *Time's Arrow* is one of the rare fictions that take place entirely in reverse time. According to Paul Nahin, *Time's Arrow* is unique in terms of “reversal of cause and effect” (1993, p. 269). In order to overcome the challenge of an inverted narration, Amis gives his character a second conscience, which he calls “the Soul” (Guardian Book Club, 2010). This conscience serves as the novel's narrator and accurately describes what is happening to him, with the exception that everything must be reversed in order to resume its original meaning. Amis employs the literary device of time inversion, skillfully imbued with apocalyptic undertones in the novel. Through this narrative technique, he strives to persuade readers of the precarious state of the world by delving into its historical origins that have ultimately converged towards a path of self-annihilation.

Conclusion provides a thorough examination and evaluation of the two novels, with particular attention paid to their employment of narrative techniques and temporal strategies. The chapter concludes the analysis of the novels. The objective of this chapter is to utilize a comparative analysis to underscore the commonalities and discrepancies in the narrative techniques utilized in the two novels. By means of an in-depth study of these accounts, a more profound comprehension of Amis's literary craftsmanship and the significant thematic preoccupations ingrained in his compositions will be unveiled. The primary objective of this comparative analysis is

to offer a thorough amalgamation that sheds light on the distinct contributions of *London Fields* and *Time's Arrow* to the contemporary literary scene, thereby reinforcing their importance within Amis's distinguished literary oeuvre.



CHAPTER II

LONDON FIELDS (1989)

As is typical of Martin Amis's fiction, the plot of *London Fields* (1989) is straightforward yet imbued with ingenious verbal plays. This characteristic wit of Amis is used more as an instrument for irony and satire in the novel. As a result, among many of his works, *London Fields* stands out as the most postmodern work of Amis. In fact, the novel is difficult to classify with just one genre in the way that the term postmodernism itself abounds with definitions. Diedrick defines *London Fields* as "a mutant form [...] an unstable mixture of millennial mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad, and domestic farce" (1995, p. 147).

As its name suggests, the novel is set in London in 1999, a decade after its publication. It takes place amid a nuclear war, "the Crisis" (Amis, 1989, p. 64), that throws humanity into social and economic turmoil along with moral degeneration. As an exploratory reference to the postmodernism that characterizes the status of British society at the end of the twentieth century, Amis builds the representation of the crisis. He depicts the period as the systematic erosion of all standards and values owing to a crisis in the metaphorical connection. In this apocalyptic fin-de-siècle realm, like the rest of the populace, the characters have lost their vitality and are awaiting the end of the world in stagnancy. However, Samson Young, the narrator-author of the novel who is terminally ill with an unknown disease, is not interested in depicting the planet that has come to the end of the road like himself. On the very first page, Samson informs the audience that the story they are about to read is a "true [...] murder [...] love story" (Amis, 1989, p. 1). Moreover, he is thrilled with the idea of writing this murder mystery that has already been plotted out. Samson is an unsuccessful American non-fiction writer who exchanges his New York apartment with the London home of a greatly popular British writer Mark Asprey – who has the

same initials as the signature that Martin Amis has chosen to use in the novel's introductory note. During his time in London, in a local pub called the Black Cross, Samson's path crosses with the main characters of his murder mystery: Nicola Six a femme fatale, and "the Murdereee" (Amis, 1989, p. 3); Keith Talent "a bad, a very bad guy" (p. 4); and Guy Clinch "a good guy" (p. 27).

Nicola lives in the same building where Asprey's apartment is and thus becomes neighbours with Samson for the time being. One day, Samson finds Nicola's diary in the garbage and discovers that she believes she will be murdered soon, more precisely on her 35th birthday. Furthermore, she has been preparing for that day since her childhood. Like a clairvoyant, she knows when she will die, where she will die, and by whom she will be killed. For Samson's final work – which he plans to be fiction – such a story has become a gem that is sure to propel him to success. Following this, he makes a deal with Nicola to monitor her life and novelize the events leading up to her death. Consequently, Samson becomes the author of the novel that is being read. However, Nicola's quest to find her murderer-to-be seems to be all part of her master plan of being killed. Because of her gift of clairvoyance, she is aware of what will happen and therefore, she knows she must adjust her behaviour accordingly. Thus, she begins to manipulate the three men. She plays the role of an innocent maiden when she is with Guy who has an unhappy marriage and a monstrous son; with Keith, she plays the role of a pornographic vamp goddess; and for Samson, she is the primary character and even the creator of the novel he has been dreaming about. By catering to their wants, Nicola leads them inexorably toward her end aim. In the beginning, Samson thinks that Nicola, Keith, and Guy are the three ends of a cross (Amis, 1989, p. 209). Nicola seems to have chosen Keith and Guy as her two potential murderers and is seducing and manipulating them in order to decide which will be the one to kill her. However, as the story unfolds and Samson gets more intertwined with the trio, he realizes that he is one of the men manipulated by Nicola from the very beginning. Samson regrets that he has not realized earlier the fact that "a cross has four points. Not three" (Amis, 1989, p. 466). Just as *London Fields* is Amis's most postmodern work, Nicola is the most postmodern character of the novel. She is "the mixture of genres" (Amis, p. 260) in the same way that postmodern fiction is:

Nicola is a literary character down to her linguistic bone. In one of her metafictional incarnations, she is an authorial alter ego – an instrument of the author's satirical aims. She is especially adept at parody. In her relationship with Guy, she enacts a grotesque parody of love; in her relationship with Keith, she performs a grotesque parody of sex; and in her relationship with Samson, she offers a sly parody of Amis's postmodern habits. Like Amis, she is merciless in her treatment of the novel's characters and takes them down with her in the end – shaming them all at the end of a shameful century. (Diedrick, 1995, p. 148).

Nicola turns the lives of the three male characters upside down. Keith's and Guy's marriages have come to an end, and Samson's expectations are shattered. Her devastating demeanour has given each of them the motive to kill her. She both manipulates the characters and shapes her plan to be killed on her prophecy. She convinces Samson that Keith is the murderer. However, her unstable manipulations create an unexpected murderer: Guy. Guy has a stereotypically kind personality, almost a cliché like every other character, thus, his decision to kill Nicola seems not only unexpected but also irrelevant for such a gentle character in every way. That is the reason he has been easily convinced by Samson. When Samson realized that Nicola has deceived him with the help of Mark Asprey, he offers Guy that he can kill Nicola in his place providing that Guy pledges to take care of Keith's abused daughter Kim. Eventually, through the end of the novel, the murder takes place as Nicola foresees. The last encounter between Samson and Nicola gives the impression that Samson is the murderer, however, it is not explicitly stated in the novel.

2.1. Narrative Strategies in *London Fields*

In *London Fields*, with his characteristic sarcasm, dark humour, and crafted use of language Amis delves into the flaws of twentieth-century culture and its morbid ideals. He skilfully employs a range of literary devices with multiple representatives of the century's Zeitgeist. The narrative of the novel is distorted by shifting points of view. Each chapter is divided into two parts without individual titles. The first part of each chapter is written in the third person which is a part of the novel written by Samson Young and the second part, on the other hand, is written in the first person in which Samson narrates his experiences while writing the novel. Because of these conflicting accounts, the narrative and the narrator become unreliable even though Samson claims that he is a reliable narrator twice in the novel (Amis, 1989, p. 78; p. 162). Samson's unreliability as a narrator is not due to his altering the truth, since he naively thinks he does not do so, but rather to the fact that

the story he is narrating is not his creation. In the diary-like second parts of the chapters, it becomes clear that Samson does not truly know the ending of the novel and makes incorrect assumptions about whom the murderer turns out to be. For instance, in the third chapter, “The Foil”, Nicola writes in her diary that she “has found [the murderer]. On the Portobello Road, in a place called the Black Cross.” (Amis, 1989, p. 22) and Samson infers that it is Keith, he even establishes his novel on this assumption and has built the very first chapter “The Murderer” specifically on Keith; he writes “Keith didn’t look like a murderer. [...] He had the talent, somewhere, but he would need the murderess to bring it out. Soon, he would find the lady. Or she would find him” (Amis, 1989, p. 8). Nevertheless, Samson is not completely wrong in his assessment that Nicola manipulates and even tempts both Keith and Guy into being murderers. She asks Keith to do all the things he wants to do to girls, in his head; however, as the worst man in the story, there is not much more for him to do to girls that he has not already done, therefore he thinks:

There *was*⁵ one thing he had wanted to do to girls and had never gone ahead and done. He had wanted to do it quite badly, and often, too (when they nagged and cried and that, or wouldn’t let you do everything you wanted). He had never murdered any of them. He had never done that. (Amis, 1989, pp. 289-290)

As with Guy, however, she is a little more compelling and even outspoken since Guy is clichédly a good man and it is “such hard *work*”⁶ (Amis, 1989, p. 192) for Nicola to drag him into being a killer. From the very beginning, she seeks to exorcise the underlying monster of Guy’s stereotypical kindness. Guy’s prudish identity which is driven by his “archaic heart” (p. 192) (almost like a Victorian gentleman), and an idealistic spirit incompatible with the corrupted century make it easier for Nicola to manipulate him. When he guessed that Nicola is a virgin of her “pinkness and purity”, she awakens a “contrary impulse [that] was telling him wrench open that chaste white dress, to take that brown body and turn it inside out” (pp. 146-147). Nicola even tells Guy, who must be capable of transforming into a killer when she needs him to, that he may kill her if he wishes (p. 147).

The problem of authenticity and authorship is a constant issue in the novel. Keulks suggests that it is a multi-layered novel in terms of “self-reflexivity and

⁵ Emphasis original.

⁶ Emphasis original.

authorial involution” (2003, p. 27). One of the most distinctive features of the novel is the interplay between different narrative authorities. The issue of authorship is problematized throughout the novel by the characters, each of whom strives to form a narrative in their own manner. In this way, *London Fields* resonates with Patricia Waugh’s description of metafiction, which defines it as a form of writing that “self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2001, p. 2) inviting contemplation on the dynamic between fiction and reality. Seemingly Samson is the novel’s most apparent writer character since he claims to be its author on the very first page and keeps a record of every event in order to novelize them. Nevertheless, he does not seem to have any of the author’s omnipotent control of the story. He is a mere observer of the drama Nicola orchestrated. His novel is a chronicle of Nicola’s life as it evolves in accordance with her premonitions. Thus, he compares his work to that of a journalist which proceeds under the control of the subject matter, “Documentary evidence. Is that what I’m writing? A documentary? As for artistic talent, as for the imaginative patterning of life, Nicola wins. She outwrites us all.” (Amis, 1989, p. 43). In fact, Samson is aware of his own incompetence over the course of the novel. He admits that he is incapable of even improvising an outline for his publisher; moreover, he confesses that Nicola is the real authority of his novel:

I guess I could just wing it. But all I know for sure is the very last scene. The car, the car-tool, the murderer waiting in his car, the murderess, ticking towards him on her heels. I don’t know how to get to the dead-end street. I close my eyes, trying to see a way — how do writers *dare*⁷ do what they do? — and there’s just chaos. It seems to me that writing brings trouble with it, moral trouble, unexamined trouble. Even to the best. I know. I’ll ask Nicola. She already has an outline. *She* can damn well do it. (Amis, 1989, p. 117)

On the other hand, according to Finney, “[although Nicola] not Sam, is in control of the fabula (story), [...] the syuzhet (or plot) is necessarily in the hands of the story’s narrator” (1995, p. 9). Samson’s knowledge of the story is apparently restricted to what Nicola wants him to know or what he has gleaned from her diary, however, as a writer trying to novelize Nicola’s story, he directs the plot either by interfering with the characters or altering the storyline. For instance, Samson concludes the fictional part of Chapter 4 by omitting certain details that give the

⁷ Emphasis original.

impression to be “Keith's sexual confessions (vicious, detailed, and unstoppable)” (Amis, 1989, p. 40) from the preceding chapter which Samson hinted that he is irresolute about using them in the novel since Keith's account seems dubious. In another instance, when Guy asks Samson for advice regarding Nicola, he “gave [his] advice (it was bad advice)” (Amis, 1989, p. 101), although knowing it would destroy Guy, he must adhere to Nicola's plan in order to protect the future of his novel. Ultimately, Samson builds a complex murder mystery in which the reader finds at the conclusion of the novel that he is the murderer. Samson's position as an author problematizes the author's authority and commitment as an ethical dimension. Although inadvertently, he alienates the reader from the supposedly correct facts and leads them to an altogether different ending. Nevertheless, his unreliability as a narrator/author figure is a typical trait of postmodern metafictional novels. According to Catherine Bernard, these contradictory texts deriving from “their attempt at redefining the logic of reference has become increasingly ambiguous” (1993, p. 122). In the same way, for the reader, Samson's authority as a writer who insists to be reliable is expected to be a sensible reference; however, despite his insistence, his contradictory assumptions in which he initially portrays Keith as the murderer, then depicts Guy as a possible murderer and finally commits the murder puts his authority in question. Although Samson remains omniscient in the parts that constitute his novel and his existence is only known to the reader from the diary parts, he murders Nicola in the last chapter and becomes the protagonist of the entire novel. Even though he wants to be kept out of the novel as a writer, the reality is that the author always inevitably finds his place in the novel as the most significant character.

As the owner of the diary that serves as the source of Samson's novel, Nicola has inevitably a significant part in shaping the novel's narrative since her approaching murder and mysterious past establish the novel's premise. This grants Nicola authorial control over the narrative, despite Samson being the novel's narrator/author. Her account of her murder is formed by her premonitions. The time, place, means, and people involved in her impending death are all known to her. Therefore, on her first encounter with Keith, Guy, and Samson in Black Cross, she already knows whom the murderer is going to be. She is self-aware and realistic about the future; hence, she understands that her method of interaction with others needs to vary depending on the specifics of each case. She deceives Samson with her volatile nature, leading the plot to an unexpected conclusion. As Keith defines her, Nicola is

“[a]ctress-like, Real pro; knows what she’s doing. The others, amateurs.” (Amis, 1989, p. 289). Despite Keith's attempt to explain how Nicola differs from the other girls, given the framework of the novel, she looks more professional than the other characters as well, exhibiting a flexible approach toward people and circumstances in order to accomplish her objective. The fact that Nicola drags the male characters into her own life, of which she is the author, and makes Samson simply a part of this drama, makes Samson's position as a writer of the novel problematic. Thus, it complicates the already complex web of relations in the novel by highlighting the fictionality of the narrative.

The ambiguous nature of the narrative affects both the characters and the overarching conceptual structure of the novel, which the narrator first gives himself false credibility for. Moreover, as the plot unfolds, it gets more and more uncertain to guess who creates the text that is being read. The blurred line between reality and fiction is bolstered by the presence of another narrative, Mark Asprey, via his interactions with other characters and inquiries into Nicola's life. Since it is signed with the initials M.A., the introductory note at the beginning of the novel appears to be written by the purported original author, Martin Amis. The author's hesitation about the novel's title is laid forth in the note, he says he “wavered and compromised with things like *Time’s Arrow*, *The Death of Love*, *Millennium*, *London Fields*, or *The Murdereee: Final Version*⁸ . . .”:

But as you see I kept ironic faith with my narrator, who would have been pleased, no doubt, to remind me that there are two kinds of title - two grades, two orders. The first kind of title decides on a name for something that is already there. The second kind of title is present all along: it lives and breathes, or it tries, on every page. My suggestions (and they cost me sleep) are all the first kind of title. *London Fields* is the second kind of title. So let's call it *London Fields*. This book is called *London Fields*. *London Fields* . . . M.A. London (Amis, 1989, xiv)

The first and most obvious observation to be made is that M.A. is the acronym for Martin Amis. However, another author character Mark Asprey, who shares initials with Martin Amis, turns out to have a significant effect on the course of events as Nicola as the novel progresses. Furthermore, Samson leaves Asprey the novel's manuscript and asks him to be his "literary executor" (Amis, 1989, p. 470) in a letter included at the end

⁸ Amis has told Will Self in an interview that “*London Fields* began life as a novella. It was going to be a sixty-page story called ‘The Murdereee’” (1993, p. 149).

of the novel. For this reason, it is possible to postulate that there are in fact two novels inside *London Fields*, a second narration that must be untangled, deconstructed, or revealed depending on the reader's engagement. As a result, the novel's narrative act ends up becoming problematic. Is M.A. a reference to Mark Asprey, who also uses the initials MA in his correspondence⁹, or to Martin Amis, who is the novel's major narrative force on all levels? Although Sam is the apparent narrator and Nicola is portrayed as the story's driving force, M.A., like a ghost, lingers in the background to inform the reader that neither Samson nor Nicola has agency of their own, they are only representatives of the author's narrative. Nicola's strategy to control her own fate and steer narrator/author Samson along this seemingly predetermined path suggests she is seeking independence from MA's influence. Samson is in the same hopeless position as Nicola, certain that the book he is penning is, in fact, a part of a much greater plot in which he plays a role. Due to the fact that they are fictitious characters in their own lives, both Nicola and Samson lack the authorial power to alter the course of events.

Early in the novel, when he sees Asprey's apartment, Samson admits that he "had gotten better of the deal [...] well and truly stiffed Asprey" (Amis, 1989, p. 2). However, when he begins to suspect that he is being set up in this exchange after learning of Asprey's dubious relationship with Nicola. Sometimes he feels that he is "in a book written by somebody else" (Amis, 1989, p. 409), he feels "seamless and insubstantial, like a creation. As if someone made [him] up, for money" (p. 469). Even after completing the novel, which is his ultimate objective, he is uncertain as to whether he has been deceived or trapped in a work of fiction. Eventually, in his letter to Asprey, he asks perhaps the most crucial question which he will never get an answer to, "PPS: You didn't set me up. Did you?" (p. 468). The blurred distinction between author and creation is welded in the novel's interweaving authorial dimensions. Thus, the identity of the power guiding the novel's narrative becomes debatable. Who is MA? Is he Mark Asprey or Martin Amis? Is Asprey only a fellow writer and a literary executor, or does he compose the entire novel? If Samson is the metafictional author of Asprey, then Asprey himself is the metafictional author of Martin Amis.

⁹ Mark Asprey signs his message to Samson Young with the initials MA (not M.A. as in the introductory note), and Samson henceforth refers to Asprey by these initials (Amis, 1989, p. 240).

Mark Asprey is not dynamically included in the plot of the novel. Although Asprey and Samson exchange letters and notes, they never meet in person; moreover, Asprey's relationship with Nicola is known to the extent of what Nicola tells Samson and what Samson has deduced from Nicola's diary. Finney argues that:

The narrator is and always has been as much of a fictional instrument as the characters in the hands of the author. The author. Not Mark Asprey. Because authors can never enter directly into their own narratives. They are compelled to invent alter egos, Sams or Mark Aspreys, who are held by the essential nature of fictional narrative at a distance from their creators who are themselves locked in their solipsistic state of non-narrative being. (Finney, 1995, p. 14)

In the same way, Asprey's commentating remarks to Samson via his notes and his curious relationship with Nicola lend credence to the theory that Asprey is the persona of Martin Amis, the actual author. In particular, on his return to the London apartment after Asprey's brief visit, Samson discovers a note from Asprey on the manuscript of the novel he is writing. Although there is no mention of the novel in Asprey's note, Samson "[is] sure he has looked at – though the pages, it's true, aren't even infinitesimally misaligned" (Amis, 1989, p. 240). Sam's conviction that Asprey does not need to look through the pages of the manuscript to understand what is in it emphasizes the concept that Asprey is already the one writing the novel. Furthermore, the fact that Samson addresses Asprey as MA hints that Amis, disguised as Asprey, has infiltrated the novel.

In order to infer a conclusion regarding narrative authority in the novel, it seems that there are contradicting cues to characterize. On the basic artistic foundations, there are a plethora of holes and breaks in the text that must be filled in and reconstructed in order to come up with a meaning. The dichotomy between freedom and control is palpable in the novel, as readers are simultaneously encouraged to fill in the gaps of the text and yet also feel constrained by the author's guiding hand. The author's omnipotent presence is felt, revealing the extent of his control over the narrative. As Stokes aptly notes the concept of the author in Amis's fiction "attempts to function in a different way, by problematizing and disseminating the authority of the text rather than immobilizing it" (1997, p. 302). In the same way, none of the three author protagonists of the novel can claim a definite narrative authority. While this obscurity effectively destabilizes the notion of fixed narrative

authority, it also strengthens it. The ambiguity surrounding authorship and authority ultimately directs attention back to the one who created it: Amis himself. According to Dern, “*London Fields* is two books under one cover” (2000, p. 46). Furthermore, it is irrefutable that Samson’s perception of himself as being made up for money alludes not only to Asprey but also to Amis, who ultimately profits from the publication of the novel. The distinction between form and content in the analysis of the novel can be compared to the differentiation between fiction and reality. In general terms, the former refers to the ontological way in which the narrative is constructed, including the implementation of metafictional devices and self-reflexivity. The latter pertains to the themes and issues that arise from the novel and can be analysed by scholars. However, in the case of *London Fields* Amis, intentionally undermines this division by blurring the lines between the two. He subverts the notion of a cohesive narrative by including himself into the plot as MA and first allowing Samson to be the author/narrator of the novel, and then excluding him along with Nicola at the end. Despite the destabilization of narrative authority throughout the novel, Amis reasserts his control by re-establishing an ontological boundary between himself and his writing. The distinction between reality and fiction is thus reinstated.

In addition to its multifaceted and intricate plot, the novel offers an introspective examination of creative capacity in general. Samson's introductory comment on the plotline “You can't stop people, once they *start*. You can't stop people, once they *start creating*” (Amis, 1989, p. 1) appears to be an effort to absolve himself of any liability for the novel's dubiousness on the surface. Nonetheless, this remark evolves into a theoretical viewpoint articulated in the novel. The idea of creation is not only examined on a metafictional level but also in the context of the characters creating one another. While Samson, Nicola, and MA are in some way the literary creators of the novel, modern Keith and the archaic Guy, construct their own realities to create Nicola. In such a desolate *mise-en-scene*, Keith and Guy are vulnerable to Nicola's machinations, as Frederick Holmes suggests:

[...] the only available narratives for constructing the self and interacting socially are either debased and shallow or hopelessly anachronistic. They are the products of mass consumerist culture and the remnants of older patterns of behaviour which no longer have currency in the society which Amis depicts. (Holmes, 1996, p. 55)

In this perspective, Keith's "reptile modernism" and Guy's "archaic heart" (Amis, 1989, p. 192) are instances of their unshakable phenotypes which undermine rather than strengthen their position in this post-apocalyptic world.

Hopelessly anachronistic Guy is an upper-class, healthy, and attractive man; however, he has lost his enthusiasm for life owing to his miserable marriage and the fact that he cannot manage his life:

Guy Clinch was a good guy — or a nice one, anyway. He wanted for nothing and lacked everything. He had a tremendous amount of money, excellent health, handsomeness, height, a capriciously original mind; and he was lifeless. He was wide open. [...] when he woke up in the morning there was - there was no life. There was only lifelessness. (Amis, 1989, p. 17)

Guy is wide open, and others fill his life for him. His American wife, Hope, seems to have total control over both their marriage and Guy's life. The birth of their son, Marmaduke, further strains their already faltering marriage. Marmaduke is depicted as a monstrous baby that is difficult to care for and nurture. Such a portrayal "represents another grotesque parody in the novel – a parody of the parenthood can have on a relationship" (Diedrick, 1995, p. 149). Their deteriorating marriage has reduced Guy to a man who serves no other purpose than to meet his wife's needs, "when Hope called his name - 'Guy?' - and he replied *Yes?* there was never any answer, because his name meant *Come here*. He appeared, and performed the necessary errand, and disappeared again" (Amis, 1989, p. 29). Now that Marmaduke has made Guy's family life even more intolerable, he has fallen under Nicola's influence. For hopeless romantic Guy, Nicola becomes the epitome of innocence and the only representative of the love he longs for. Guy, who is born into a privileged upbringing, finds it difficult to comprehend the realities of the moral decline of the society in which he lives. Not only does he act like an antiquated gentleman, but he also sees Nicola as "so placed, so cloistered" (Amis, 1989, p. 330) as a Victorian lady. The resistance he shows to his sexual impulses for Nicola is emblematic of his archaic nature; when he can relieve his now-painful erections, he cannot even bear to think of the chaste Nicola as the subject of such bestial fantasies:

He had this toy of Nicola in his head, oval, blue-backed, like a Victorian miniature. Symbol of the real thing. The real thing. Three brutal jolts would certainly finish it. But all kinds of considerations — including squeamishness, another kind of *amour propre*, and the thought of all the mess it would leave - combined, as always, to stay his hand. You wouldn't want to play with it like that. (Amis, 1989, p. 221)

His inability to adapt to the realities of life makes him an easy target for Nicola's "little love parodies" (Amis, 1989, p. 349). Without a second thought, he believes what Nicola wants him to believe. She takes advantage of Guy's anachronistic tendencies in order to achieve her ultimate objective. She manipulates him by fabricating fictitious personalities and situations in which she acts as the naive young lady in need of love and support. She gives the impression that she is well-versed in the academic realm of fine arts — a topic about which Guy is also passionate — to show that she is atypical and to draw Guy's attention. Nicola persuades Guy that her imaginary friend, Enola Gay, and her son Little Boy have vanished during a war in Cambodia.¹⁰ She wants Guy's help to find them. He uses every connection he has in order to find the lost mother and son that do not exist. Guy, certain that he has finally met the love of his life, is manipulated by Nicola to confess their affair to his wife Hope. However, later, Guy discovers the truth about Enola in the book Nicola handed him and is outraged. Thus, she manages to create a potential murderer out of a gentleman.

Keith's narrative, on the other hand, is the "debased and shallow" one that Holmes suggests (1996, p. 55). He has the stereotypical traits of a con artist: many low-key criminal aliases, a penchant for pornographic entertainment, and an unhealthy obsession with darts. Keith's consistent, inflexible personality is contrasted with Nicola's fluid identity via the recurrent usage of the term "modern, modern, modern" (Amis, 1989, p. 59) to describe him. Keith's sense of self is built on tabloids and television:

And that tube burnt him, nuked him, its cathodes crackling like cancer. 'TV,' he thought, or 'Modern reality' or The world'. It was the world of TV that told him what the world was. How does all the TV time work on a modern person, a person like Keith? (Amis, 1989, p. 55)

In the same way, his interactions with women are shaped by pornography "his libido would be all tabloid and factoid" (Amis, 1989, p. 202). Through exaggerated images, the novel depicts the impact of the media on Keith's perception of himself and reality. Keith finds it difficult to accept the reality when Nicola notifies him that his favourite actor is homosexual since he firmly believes that the camera never lies. This revelation alters Keith's sense of reality, "for a few seconds he blinked steadily

¹⁰ Enola Gay was the bomber aircraft that was used by the USA to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan in 1946. The aircraft was named after its pilot's mother. Little Boy was the name of the atomic bomb that was dropped.

on a heartbeat rhythm. And his face creased in childish unhappiness” (p. 190). Nicola manipulates Keith by playing on his inability to distinguish between reality and fiction. She begins filming pornographic videos for Keith once realizing that he enjoys seeing sex on television more than experiencing it physically. She truly understands Keith’s struggle; when they get intimate right after Keith watches one of Nicola’s pornographic videos, he fails to satisfy Nicola and says in self-pity that it is because of “Pressures of darts” (p. 429), Nicola is nonetheless aware of the truth, and she utters “Yes. And a little difficulty switching from one medium to another.” (p. 429). In contrast to Keith, Nicola sees both reality and fiction as fundamentally equal concepts that are malleable to meet any situation. Despite the fact that Keith’s modernity exempts him from the need to change, his unwavering stance ironically undermines his position in the declining society at the end of the century. Like Romantic Guy, he falls prey to Nicola’s manipulations.

Even though Nicola recognizes that the personas of a chaste woman or a sex object, which she adopts for Guy and Keith, are not indicative of her essential self, and despite her calculating ability to employ these roles for pertaining to hidden motives, her distant attitude towards these roles ultimately proves ineffective in releasing her from the influence of them. On this issue, Holmes claims that:

She exaggerates the two personas [‘Madonna’ and ‘whore’] to such an extreme extent that she manages to heap parodic scorn on them, but she embodies them nevertheless. The only escape from this doubleness is death, not as meaningless extinction but as narrative closure (Holmes, 1996, p. 61).

It seems paradoxical that Nicola uses her manipulative power over other characters to plan her own demise. Throughout the novel, Nicola asserts that she has psychic abilities, and it is a prophecy that she will inevitably be murdered. Whereas Samson believes that her obsession to be murdered is delusional, he tells her to “Call it off. [...] Forget it. Do something else. Live.” (Amis, 1989, p. 118). However, it is not made explicit in the novel whether her inevitable death is a premonition or a self-fulfilling prophecy. Nicola’s vision of her own death not only exemplifies the complexity of the characters in the novel but also reflects the narrative of the novel’s fictional intention of blurring the lines between reality and fiction. For Holmes, Nicola’s demise is “a postmodernist parody of the deconstructionist position on language and meaning” (1996, p. 53). In this context, it is sensible that Nicola’s

preoccupation with her own murder is open to interpretation, while at the same time, the meaning of her death is ambiguous and not fixed. Nonetheless, as a postmodern figure, she decides to end all this ambiguity and reach an ultimate meaning which is death. At this point, Holmes further asks “But [...] is her death really an exit from the labyrinth of the text?” (p. 54). Even the fact that Nicola’s death has a meaning does not save the novel’s narratives from their spiral of unreliability at the deconstructionist level.

Nicola’s death appears to be part of an apocalyptic metaphor, reflecting the novel’s overall feeling of uncertainty and fragmentation. Like the city of London itself, the characters in the novel are all on the verge of some kind of existential crisis or breakdown, and they each resort to self-destructive actions. The nuclear crisis depicted in the novel or the apocalypse itself has a tremendous psychological effect on the characters, frequently bordering on trauma. This necessitates transferring the concept of trauma, which is prevalent in Amis's writings in general, into the postapocalyptic setting. The world of *London Fields* faces a tremendous crisis, leading to the questioning of all established norms and values, hence providing a favourable ground for the apocalypse to arise and influence its narrative. Amis’s writing enables itself to be impacted by the idea of the end, resulting in a writing process that fosters creativity. As Stephan Kraitsowits argues the apocalypse “bleeds dry from all previous writing and brings out a new word” (2011, p. 63). Thus, the use of the apocalyptic register leads to a subversion of established literary conventions and norms. The result is the emptying of words of their content, yet they will soon be recharged in the opposite direction.

The prospect of an imminent nuclear war is emblematic of the modern condition which pulls together the catastrophes discussed in the underlying text. The Third World War, which looms over the novel, is effectively stated by the use of conditional discourse with predictive value. It represents the modern form of an approaching tragedy, which conjures the terror that occurs when an unusual astronomical phenomenon advances on the day of Nicola’s premeditated murder:

That at the moment of full eclipse on November 5, as the Chancellor made his speech in Bonn, two very big and very dirty nuclear weapons would be detonated, one over the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, one over Marble Arch. That until the cease of the flow of fissionable materials from Baghdad, the Israelis would be targeting Kiev. That the President's wife was

already dead. That the confluence of perihelion and syzygy would levitate the oceans. That the sky was falling — (Amis, 1989, p. 394)

The irony present in the text lies in the way it blends the Crisis or New Apocalypse, which is the sense of an impending catastrophic event, with personal drama. Moreover, Samson is depicted as the embodiment of the entropy that characterizes the contemporary world, as highlighted when he comments “We're all in it together now. As is the case with the world situation, something will have to give, and give soon” (Amis, 1989, p. 239). This shift from the sacred to the profane reflects the fact that the modern apocalypse has become immanent in the daily life of society.

As the novel draws close to a potentially catastrophic finale with the inevitable threat of an immense explosion, the tension reaches its climax in the chapter “Horrorday”. However, the impending cataclysm abruptly dissipates, giving way to a sequence of individual dramas, signalling the novel's departure from conventional apocalyptic themes. In fact, the chapter opens with a series of events that hint at the imminent apocalyptic event: “The first three events—light, sound and impact—were all but simultaneous” (Amis, 1989, p. 437). On the other hand, the occurrences that follow later in the day and during the rest of Keith’s day are more routine. It becomes clear that the narrative is moving away from catastrophic themes as Keith’s “horrorday” (p. 437) becomes more horror-full and the global Crisis seems to be resolving itself:

As he drove home he listened irritably to the news, the dissolution of the Crisis, the improving condition of the President's wife, the delegations leaving simultaneously for Paris and Prague (not a summit: more like twin peaks), and wondered if this explained the pronounced congestion he encountered in Ladbroke Grove. [...] On the narrow walkstrip Keith attacked the lock, which was often recalcitrant. But today was horrorday. [...] On the outer mat were four horrorletters: two horrorbills, a horrorsummons, and a horrororder of distraint. (Amis, 1989, pp. 446-447)

In the final chapter, the global fear that an asteroid impact could lead to a new Crisis and international tension seem to be decreased. However, Nicola’s self-immolation on the verge of the catastrophe results in personal drama. In a conversation between Samson and Nicola about Samson’s atypical disease, Nicola remarks “In a way, you are the Crisis” and Samson responds, “I am not the Crisis, I’m more like the Situation” (Amis, 1989, p. 161). Given that Samson’s illness is related to the radiogenic consequence of the Crisis, his statement is significant. He

sees himself as a product or result of the Crisis, rather than an active participant in it. It also emphasizes the long-term effects of this cataclysmic environment, which continue to impact the characters even after the immediate threat has passed. In the end, while the anticipated International Crisis does not come to fruition, the characters' journeys take a downward turn that culminates in the intertwined fate of Samson and Nicola. The murder of one character and the suicide of the other brings the novel to a conclusion that emphasizes the personal, rather than global, ramifications of the Crisis.

The implementation of an unreliable narrator in the novel serves to enhance the pervasive sense of apocalypse and uncertainty that permeates the plotline. The apocalyptic metaphor and the unreliable narrator work together to emphasize the precarious nature of human life and the dangers that lie ahead in a chaotic world. The novel's broader philosophical themes regarding destiny, individual autonomy, and the interconnectedness of all things are underscored by the coincidence of cataclysmic events and Nicola's death occurring on the same day. By juxtaposing these apparently unrelated components in a single scene, Amis invites readers to think about the broader possible consequences of these topics and ponder on the meaning and purpose of human existence in the light of its inherent unpredictability and ephemerality.

2.2. Temporal Experiments in *London Fields*

Martin Amis, in "Time Disease", one of the short stories in his collection *Einstein's Monsters* (1987), asserts that time has become a prevalent disease of the twentieth century, occupying our thoughts and attention. He observes that the majority of our mental activity is committed to considering the passage of time and that we no longer pretend to concentrate on anything else. Amis uses the metaphor of catching time or coming down with time and acknowledges that he himself is not yet afflicted with the disease; he suggests that time is an epidemic that has multiple origins:

Some say the time was caused by congestion, air plague, city life (and city life is the only kind of life there is these days). Others say that *time* was the result of the first nuclear conflict [...] Still others say that time was an evolutionary consequence of humankind's ventures into space [...] Me, I think it was the twentieth century that did it. The twentieth century was all it took. (Amis, 1987, p. 73)

In a similar vein, *London Fields* attacks the contemporary world's fixation on technology and development, highlighting the influence of social, psychological, and cultural elements on one's experience of time and attributing these aspects to the fragmented and distorted nature of that view. Amis's narrative is structured by his apocalyptic imagination, which is mirrored in the novel's chaotic occurrences. The novel presents a unique and humorous perspective on the apocalypse by skilfully describing a modern condition of crisis and the loss of recognized places.

As stated in the Introduction, Amis's preoccupation with time is closely linked to his fascination with the themes of apocalypse and holocaust, which are recurring motifs in his works. Indeed, Amis is renowned for investigating the historical roots of modern atrocities. In order to convince his readers of the gravity of the current global problems, he often references the Holocaust and the explosion of the first atomic bomb. Amis's goal in depicting historical events is to provoke serious thought about the urgent necessity for bold action to solve the world's major concerns. Apocalyptic connotations infuse Amis's use of temporal inversion as a narrative device. As a writer who considers himself a product of the post-war period, he portrays a world that is radically distinct from the ones that existed before the war. Amis uses time inversion to depict a dystopian future when everything is falling apart, and a catastrophe is on the horizon. Furthermore, this method shows how the past continues to have an impact on the present. Amis uses this temporal trick to urge prudence and awareness in the face of an uncertain future.

London Fields may also be read as a novel about the Holocaust but set in the aftermath of a nuclear explosion. In the novel, Amis addresses the subject of the apocalypse using allusions rather than logical and sensible answers that may possibly weaken the apocalyptic theme of the novel. Through the experiences of the characters, the setting, and the narrative style, this type of allusion permits an examination of the apocalypse, which often tends to be explained by religious beliefs.

The theme of reverse chronology is prominent in Amis's fictional universe to the extent that the novel was almost titled *Time's Arrow* instead of *London Fields*. Amis captivates the reader from the outset of the novel by instilling a sense of anticipation through the declaration that "This is a story of a murder. It hasn't

happened yet. But it will.” (1989, p. 1). In this context, it is plausible to surmise that Amis intended to choose the title *Time's Arrow* to convey a deeper thematic significance. The inexorable fate of Samson and Nicola, underscored as an unavoidable outcome within the novel, eventually reaches its culmination at the end of the novel, albeit through unexpected means. Notably, Amis employs the phrase “time’s arrow” sparingly, appearing only twice within the novel. However, one of the instances resonates with the idea that he follows in his very novel *Time's Arrow* (1991):

We're all in it together now. As is the case with the world situation, something will have to give, and give soon. [...] Everything is winding down, me, this, mother earth. More: the universe, though apparently roomy enough, is heading for heat death. I hope there are parallel universes. I hope alternatives exist. Who stitched us up with all these design flaws? Entropy, time's arrow — ravenous disorder. The designer universe. (Amis, 1989, p. 432)

This deliberate usage highlights the author’s astute narrative creativity and contributes to the overarching exploration of time’s unyielding trajectory and its impact on the characters’ lives. In fact, almost three years after *London Fields*, Amis has written another novel with the same title, *Time's Arrow* (1991), one of Amis’s most significant works which will be studied in further detail later in this thesis, has a unique position in literature by reversing the narrative. Whereas in *Time's Arrow*, Amis uses a narrative structure in which the events unfold in reverse chronological order and depicts the life of a Holocaust doctor, in *London Fields*, the reader is informed at the outset that a murder will occur and that the victim’s identity is known. In both novels, Amis explores larger themes and ideas, as the reader is already aware of the tragic outcome and can reflect on the events and characters leading up to it. According to Anne Fortin-Tournes, while it may be morally questionable, using the “reversed Holocaust” (2003a, para. 52) as an allegory in fiction to represent something other than itself is a valid choice. In *London Fields*, Amis uses this metaphor to depict a New Apocalypse or the Crisis as a modern version of the apocalypse, in opposition to religious discourses on the subject. This critical apocalyptic discourse in the novel opposes the prevailing religious discourse on the apocalypse in an era marked by widespread doubt and questioning of religion:

Even the Old Testament expected the Apocalypse 'shortly'. In times of mass disorientation and anxiety . . . But I am trying to ignore the world situation. I am hoping it will go away.

Not the world. The situation. I want time to get on with this little piece of harmless escapism.
I want time to go to London Fields. (Amis, 1989, p. 64)

This exemplifies how Amis, via his metaphorical language, creates a dystopian environment in which apocalyptic rhetoric is possible. For Fortin-Tournes, Amis's apocalyptic allegory is marked by its multiplicity of interpretations and the resulting ambiguity (2003b, para. 1). The capitalization of "Crisis" and "Conclusion" lends credence to this perspective, as they become more than simply symbols for the New Apocalypse and take on the same significance as the apocalypse of the Old Testament. This is because, like the end of the world, the Crisis ushers in a time of immense confusion and suffering.

This narrative approach of disclosing part of the conclusion at the beginning of the story is employed to create a sense of suspense and anticipation. By revealing these details upfront, the reader is drawn into the story, curious about how the events will unfold, and eager to discover the motivations and circumstances behind the murder. The characters' expectations about the end of the world are used as a benchmark for when that end will really occur. The passage of time is central to this intricate depiction of the end of the world. There is a sharp break between the time before the Crisis and the beginning of the events, and not much time is left to prepare for it. Since the Crisis has taken over, time has sped up significantly, and many intangible values, such as love, morality, and innocence, have been lost. Everything is determined by the imminence of the end and the anticipation of its coming. The conception of the end is governed by time, yet it expresses itself via the characters' connection to meaning. In other words, characters' anticipation of the end involves not just an awareness of time running out, but also an effort to find significance in that impending end. This search for meaning drives their visualization, and embodiment of the end, as they try to give it shape and substance. Ultimately, their relationship to meaning shapes and defines their understanding of the end, layering it with personal experiences, values, and beliefs. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur argues that the end intensifies our perception of time, creating a sensibility that is driven by expectation and memory:

Prediction is explained in a way that is scarcely more complex. It is thanks to a present expectation that future things are present to us as things to come. We have a "pre-perception" (*praesensio*) of this which enables us to "foretell" them (*praenuntio*). Expectation is thus the

analogue to memory. It consists of an image that already exists, in the sense that it precedes the event that does not yet exist (*nondum*). However, this image is not an impression left by things past but a "sign" and a "cause" of future things which are, in this way, anticipated, foreseen, foretold, predicted, proclaimed beforehand (note the richness of the everyday vocabulary of expectation). (Ricoeur, 1984, 11)

In this sense, it would be inaccurate to suggest that anticipation is the primary determinant of time. Then the expectation serves as a close resemblance to the apocalypse, as the act of making a prediction inherently involves anticipating something to come, thus connecting it to the end of time. Accordingly, expectation represents the shift from the past to the future. In *London Fields*, there is a sense of urgency to fill the gap, which is the void between the present and the future. The gap, however, is the anticipation or expectation of the future. Nevertheless, before this can be achieved, it is necessary to locate at which point the prediction will occur. In order to fully understand the predicted events, it is important to consider their spatial location within the context of time, rather than simply in their physical form. The projected space is not a static, three-dimensional location, but rather a temporal space connected to the idea of time. In the novel, this space-time is meticulously determined and can be seen as a form of prophecy.

The foundational narrative of many religious writings is based on the apocalypse and the preternatural predictions leading to it, which is why the word prophecy is often connected with religious context. Indications and myths abound in the prophetic discourse, providing sustenance for the vision and a method of temporal stability. Within this structure, the end may be accurately dated. The prophetic message, in its different manifestations, serves as a touchstone for the end-of-the-world fantasy in apocalyptic literature. A natural catastrophe, a supernova, is the designated medium for the prophecy in *London Fields*:

A unique configuration of earth, moon and sun will cause hemispherical flooding. There will be sunquakes, and superbolt lightning. A nearby supernova will presently drench the planet in cosmic rays, causing another Great Extinction. The supernova stuff strikes me as a pure *definition* of rumour. How do we know about the supernova until we can see it? Nothing, no information, can reach us faster than cosmic light. There's a speed limit up there. The universe is full of signs, circled in red, saying 186,287. (Amis, 1989, p. 118)

Here Samson assumes the role of a prophet, delivering messages about the impending end of the world. While the exact timing and nature of the apocalypse

remain unclear, the end is alluded to frequently throughout the novel. The concept of the apocalypse is no longer solely associated with the loss of faith in God or catastrophic natural disasters. Instead, it is now regarded as part of a tremendous catastrophe. Samson's vision of the apocalypse portrays time as a precious resource capable of preserving the world. For him, the apocalypse is there and will eventually happen, waiting like a promise, and his request for "time to go to London Fields" (Amis, 1989, p. 64) is an indication of this. The conventional biblical view of the apocalypse is challenged by this presentation of the end as a scientific and logical occurrence. Through this, Amis demystifies the mythic elements surrounding the end and offers a fresh perspective on its meaning. However, the apocalypse is predicted only from rumours.

The scientific basis for the representation of the great extinction does not extend to the explanation of its causes, which is pure conjecture. To express the image of terror that comes with the apocalyptic message, which is placed in a meta-discursive inference with the efficacy of apocalyptic discourse, Amis thus resorts to allusion rather than a clear explanation. The narrative adopts meta-discursive reasoning with the intensity of an apocalyptic message by depending on vague rumours as opposed to concrete facts. As a result, the reliance on rumour creates inverted scepticism, the reader is led to question their own level of conviction and reliability. This approach outperforms a merely scientific or factual explanation since it touches on a more primal sense of fear and uncertainty.

The relationship between cosmic and personal prophecies of apocalypse may seem much less apparent but no less significant in the novel. The narrative of Nicola's foreseen death becomes interwoven with the anticipated outcomes of the global nuclear holocaust, leading to a double catastrophe. There are two things to note in this context. The first is that one of the two prophecies in the novel – the great extinction and the premeditated murder – is authored by Nicola herself, she predicts the latter in its ultimate stage and becomes a victim. The second is that neither Samson nor Nicola possesses complete knowledge regarding how these prophecies will unfold. Despite Nicola's ability to foresee events and Samson's role as a witness to her predictions, they do not have a full understanding of how these events will happen. This complicates the already ambiguous apocalyptic storyline of the novel and calls into question the validity of prophecy as a reference to the future.

Nicola is the primary embodiment of the novel's prophetic theme. She is portrayed as a master of manipulating time within the narrative. Despite being aware of her imminent demise, Nicola is resolute in "her project [...] to get through men — to get to the end of men" (Amis, 1989, p. 188). Nicola's unwavering determination to achieve this objective is a central theme in the novel and adds a layer of complexity to the narrative. In this sense, she embodies the concept of death, and all the adversities that haunt humankind, which she actively seeks to inflict upon the men she keeps company with. In doing so, she undermines the possibility of survival that time provides, thereby bringing a sense of hopelessness and despair to the narrative.

It is noteworthy that Nicola is not merely a passive observer of the prophesied events but an active participant in shaping them. Her actions are portrayed as deliberate and purposeful, and she remains steadfast in her resolve to see her plan through to the end. Despite the bleakness of her objective, Nicola's character is depicted as complex and multifaceted, which serves to add depth and nuance to the novel's themes. Her actions and motivations serve as a commentary on the human condition, and her unwavering determination to achieve her goal adds a layer of intrigue and complexity to the story.

The portrayal of Nicola's antagonism to humanistic emotions such as sympathy is reminiscent of Frederick Nietzsche's argument that "nothing is more unhealthy amidst our unhealthy modernity than Christian pity" (2004, p. 107). This mirrors Nietzsche's nihilistic philosophy, which, although biased and polemical, has certain things in common with the novel's depiction of the collapse of grand narratives, such as the failure of religious beliefs to provide meaningful guidance in the face of contemporary crises. Noble Christian principles like sympathy, chastity, humility, poverty, and pity are condemned by Nietzsche since they are seen to have done more damage to life than any sin or evildoing. When discussing the apocalyptic undertones of *London Fields*, it is important to note the novel's backdrops for time. As it is stated in the Introduction, *London Fields* is one of the novels from Amis's apocalyptic triptych. In this sense, the Holocaust and the nuclear threat serve as a backdrop or reference point for the apocalyptic theme in Amis, highlighting the ways in which the potential for destruction and devastation is an ever-present possibility in human history. These reference points confirm that the unthinkable has indeed taken place in the novel's dystopian world. By incorporating historical references and

themes of nihilism, the novel critiques traditional notions of morality and challenges readers to consider the implications of the novel's apocalyptic vision.

2.3. Hybrid Postmodernism of Martin Amis

Postmodern discourse is characterized by its refusal to acknowledge any truth or knowledge as a source of authority, which hinders its capacity to draw firm conclusions about the connection between signs and reality. By claiming that it is impossible to stand apart from the prevailing ideology, postmodern discourse indicates that it, too, is bound by the same ideological norms as the same system it criticizes. Therefore, any postmodernist term that purports to be agnostic to ideology and to reflect empirical proof is illusory. By using allegory to critically engage postmodern discourse and investigate its diverse and heterogeneous character, Martin Amis draws attention to this postmodernist conflict. In the case of *London Fields*, the allegory is reversed to the point that it becomes fundamental to and defines what it represents.

As detailed in the Introduction, Jean-Francois Lyotard characterizes postmodernity as a period of skepticism about meta-discourses, resulting from demise of metaphysics. This skepticism or incredulity drives the legitimization function to take refuge in dispersed linguistic elements, micro-narratives, local truths, and particular language games that may not communicate with each other and remain heterogeneous. If postmodern knowledge exists, according to Lyotard, it is knowledge about differences, the paralogical, and the heterodox (1984, pp. xxiv-xxv). In the case of *London Fields*, the fall of meta-narratives is represented by the metaphor of generalized entropy, which affects not only reality but also discourses about the world. This exemplifies the postmodern concept of a crisis of meaning and the difficulty of a single grand narrative providing conclusive explanations. The novel illustrates the disjointed and varied nature of knowledge and micro-narratives, as well as the impossibility of establishing a single, authoritative discourse. In doing so, Amis presents a postmodern viewpoint on the bounds and complexity of knowledge and understanding in the modern world, critiquing the concept of universal, objective truth and the conventional bases of authority that affect not only the world but also discourses on the world. Amis employs Nicola's death as a metaphor for the death of meta-narratives:

[Nicola] welcomed and applauded the death of just about anything. It was company. It meant you weren't quite alone. A dead flower, the disobliging turbidity of dead water, slow to leave the jug. A dead car half-stripped at the side of the street, shot, busted, annulled, abashed. A dead cloud. The Death of the Novel. The Death of Animism, the Death of Naive Reality, the Death of the Argument from Design, and (especially) the Death of the Principle of Least Astonishment. The Death of the Planet. The Death of God. The death of love. It was company. The death of physics, for example. (Amis, 1989, p. 296)

This is consistent with Lyotard's theory that postmodernism is characterized by its abandonment of grand narratives and the fragmentation of the subject matter. However, Amis expands on this concept by describing a comical end for meta-narratives. This is accomplished by his deliberate obfuscation of the distinctions between various forms of speech and the level of importance assigned to each. Such examples are the "Principle of the Least Surprise", which is a pseudo-scientific discourse, and the romantic view of art as the sanctuary of truth. This indicates that the fall of meta-narratives and the degradation of their authority may affect any of these discourses. Amis's criticism of great narratives and the arbitrariness of language and the constructiveness of all speech is thus strengthened. This move of him also echoes Roland Barthes's definition of language as "floating chain of signifieds" (1977, p. 39) with no fixed meaning. In this manner, Amis uses Nicola's demise to remark on the fluctuation of language and the disintegration of authority in modern society.

The novel with its portrayal of characters who defy established conventions and authorities makes the novel a prototypical postmodern work. Even more, one might argue that it matches postmodern discourse almost too well. The primary quartet consists of flawed characters that do not adhere to standard heroic archetypes: a femme fatale obsessed with the prediction that she will be murdered, a poor low-key criminal, a decent wealthy man, and a dying writer who has gone to great lengths to make his last novel a juicy bestseller. As Diedrick states Nicola represents the epitome of postmodernism (1995, p. 148). In the first scene that Samson introduces Nicola in his novel, she is preparing for a funeral of a woman whom she barely knows. To her, attending a funeral and preparing appropriately seemed much more important than the identity of the deceased:

She went at her face like an artist, funeral colours, black, beige, blood red. Rising, she turned to the bed and reviewed her burial clothes and their unqualified sable. Even her elaborate underwear was

black; even the clips on her garter belt were black, black. [...] Fifteen minutes later, dressed for death, she called her black cab and drank two cups of black coffee and tasted with hunger the black tobacco of a French cigarette. (Amis, 1989, pp. 19-21)

Nicola's varied responses to diverse circumstances and individuals exemplify the inherent adaptability of reality. She embodies the postmodernist perspective by exhibiting a fluidity in her behaviour and beliefs throughout the novel, blurring the boundaries between reality and imagination and revealing the multiple interpretations and storylines present within the fictional universe of the novel.

In the postmodern world, as Lyotard argues there is no universal knowledge or scientific truth (1984, p. 29). Disappearing universal notions are replaced by relative realities. In the same line, Amis in the novel broadens the range of possible realities in which one set of meanings gives way to another. The ambiguity of the meaning is provided by the language and style used, as well as the incomprehensibility of the narratives due to the gaps left in the narrative. The novel portrays the breakdown of the grand narratives that structure human experience, including the Marxist discourse, History, and religion. Although the novel offers a captivating depiction of the Marxist thesis, it does this without attempting to provide a comprehensive analysis. The novel alludes to the Proletarian Revolution in its backdrop through one of Amis's "most memorable character[s], cockney petty criminal Keith Talent" (Hawkes, 1997, p. 35) who serves as a parody of the downfall of Marxist discourse. It is given the impression that what is approaching is not only the apocalypse but also that the proletariat is preparing for an uprising: "And let's not forget the Second Coming, also awaited, in quiet confidence. Or not so quiet. On the street the poor rock and sway, like burying parties. All their eyes are ice" (Amis, 1989, p. 118). The novel additionally critiques the literary establishment for prioritizing monetary profit and its present preoccupation with pornographic subject matter. The radicalization of the concept of the unreliability of facts engenders a universal problem concerning comprehension and existence. The sordid perspective presented is in line with the principles of postmodernism. Thus, Amis portrays a universe where the concept of nihilism and the eradication of significance have been entirely actualized, resulting in a state where occurrences and concepts are devoid of any interrelation.

While exploiting parodic discourse to present a critical perspective, Amis transforms this pessimism through the allegory of the apocalypse into a popular revolution that glorifies the energy of the man in the street. At the same time, pessimistic postmodernism sees it as the ultimate destination. His criticism, sometimes marked by grotesque excess, exaggeration, caricature, overbidding on the impossible, and literalization of the metaphorical, adopts the characteristics of the ecstatic Bakhtinian carnival. With its momentary inversions, jubilant overthrow of established structures, and celebration of the body, Bakhtinian carnival is a glorification of life that belongs to “a borderline between art and life [...] it is life itself but shaped according to certain pattern of play” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 7). Then, *London Fields* is a carnivalesque representation of the apocalypse, given that the apocalypse is a recurring theme in bleak postmodernism. Amis transforms the carnival mode into a celebratory uprising of the people and a tribute to the power of the common man’s word. His carnivalization is not solely meant to be satirical; rather, the postmodern discourse with the subjective and nihilistic drifts it has produced is the intended target of the sharp irony at play here. The interpretation of Linda Hutcheon, for whom parodical irony displays “how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference” (2002, p. 89) is helpful for understanding the essential role that irony might serve in this context. Amis’s sardonic perspective serves a fundamental purpose by creating a break between the staged, carnivalized item and its actual counterpart. This disparity enables him to reveal the philosophy that lies behind the carnivalized item. Amis suggests that sarcasm and the trivialization of universal deconstruction are at the heart of the apocalyptic staging of a world brought to the verge where it becomes carnivalesque. By making this philosophy the narrative framework of the novel, Amis alludes to its potentially destructive or even suicidal nature as it guides Nicola to her tragic conclusion.

In the novel, Amis combines the postmodern sarcasm at which he excels with the carnivalesque irony that celebrates the playground of language, even when that playground is destructive since it surpasses the grammatical norms that regulate it. The novel inhabits the terrain of a creative and artistic language, one that sets up its own norms and is not satisfied to just criticize the social or linguistic status quo. The narrative chooses to interact with the outside world; unlike purely metafictional

works, which concentrate only on the author and the issues they confront in the present, it does not treat itself to be the main point of focus. As a matter of fact, this last aspect is evident in the novel, it presents a narrator who is suffering from “writer’s block” (Amis, 1989, p. 99) and, as a result, is condemned to copy and paste his heroine’s diary. Amis’s narrative reconstructed in the pragmatic sense of Bakhtinian carnival generates a new universe marked by grotesque realism. The theoretical foundations that underpin this fictitious realm are focused on notions of inadequacy, alteration, development, linguistic play, polysemy, motion, and vitality. These values are in stark contrast to the bleak and catastrophic motifs that postmodernism has adopted as the symbol of its ideology.

Indeed, the use of allegory in Amis is distinguished by its indeterminate and multifaceted nature of meaning. For instance, the vision of the Crisis or the apocalypse in the novel operates allegorically, with the meaning that allegory is a structure of language designed to convey one idea via the use of representations. Amis employs this notion as a distinct writing mode, characterized by the strategic utilization of antithetical elements, hyperbole, and allusion, which provides the text with a referential quality beyond its own boundaries. Hence, it can be assumed that the Crisis necessitates a deeper interpretation beyond its literal meaning and may benefit from one or multiple subsequent readings of a metaphorical nature. The use of allegory, on the other hand, is of a critical nature as it poses a challenge to the notion of a straightforward and simplistic language, capable of conveying meaning solely at the literal level. In this sense, Amis in *London Fields* makes use of an allegory of the Crisis to convey a critical understanding of language, obtained by the interrogation of a particular style:

Even the Old Testament expected the Apocalypse 'shortly'. [...] Sometimes I wonder whether I can keep the world situation out of the novel: the crisis, now sometimes called the Crisis (they can't be *serious*). Maybe it's like the weather. Maybe you can't keep it out. Will it reach the conclusion it appears to crave - will the Crisis reach the Conclusion? Is it just the nature of the beast? We'll see. I certainly hope not. I would lose many potential readers, and all my work would have been in vain. And that would be a *real* bitch. (Amis, 1989, p. 64)

This passage demonstrates the establishment of allegorical interpretation by capitalization for the terms “Crisis” and “Conclusion”. The aforementioned emphasis serves to denote a secondary, abstract meaning that is incorporated within the overall

framework of the allegory. The use of capitalization gives the terms a heightened symbolic and conceptual significance, thereby alluding to the symbolic foundation of the written work. The reference to the Apocalypse in the opening of the given quote contributes to the secondary connotation of the text, prompting the reader to construe the conclusion of the passage, particularly the term “beast” through a biblical lens¹¹ and link it to the allegorical framework that the novel has instituted. Amis employs a metaphorical foundation to encourage the reader to decipher this deception by delving beyond the surface-level interpretation and uncovering a secondary meaning that is related to the allegorical system. As a matter of fact, Amis, with the use of capitalization and italicization of the words, “produces a commentary in the discourse of the crisis [...] a discourse which he designates as ambient and vis-à-vis” (Fourtin-Tournes, 2003, p. 39). The allegory interwoven within the novel aims to address the contemporary discourse of the apocalypse or crisis, which holds a prominent position within postmodern discourse. The notion that the postmodern state and contemporary cultural and socioeconomic associations are indicative of a meaning crisis is evident in Amis’s literature, which sets the stage for an imminent catastrophe. Similar to how the Apocalypse in the biblical book of Revelation offers a theological understanding of history by means of a symbolic representation of ultimate triumphs, Amis’s *New Apocalypse or the Crisis* presents an allegorical interpretation of postmodern discourse by reimagining the biblical one.

Amis addresses the issue of the crisis in the relationship between the signifier and the signified, as well as between the signifier and the referent, in his work. The *Crisis* serves as an allegorical representation that is related to a discourse on the ambiguity of language. In this context, language is depicted as being precarious, untrustworthy, and capable of generating monstrous proliferation. The narrative of the *Crisis* draws on postmodernism as a framework, wherein the apocalypse serves as a fundamental metaphor. The imminence of the *Crisis* in the novel thus results in the demolition of the sign. This highlights the problem of representation of the *Crisis* and in turn, the crisis of the representation, which is a topic of discussion in certain discourses from the twentieth century that Amis strikingly illustrates:

¹¹ The scriptural passage of Revelation 13:11-18 portrays the emergence of the beast (a second beast), subsequently identified as the false prophet, from the earth. This entity compels all inhabitants of the earth to engage in the veneration of the first beast.

To begin with, they were obscure, distant, they were deepest black. The Proxy War had put a curve on things when both sides agreed, or when 'both sides agreed', to play their game in the dark. This condition they quickly brought about by a declared policy, much publicized in the press and on television, of killing all journalists. No longer could the foreign correspondents hop from foxhole to foxhole with their media tags in their hatbands and then telex their stories over cocktails from the garden rooftops of scorched Hiltons. In response, rogue camera crews-chartered jeeps and choppers; malarial war-freaks climbed out of opium bunks and firmed up their stringerships; one-legged photographers with lumps of Ho's shrapnel still lodged in their brainpans stood on border roads with their thumbs in the air. They went in, but they didn't come out. [...] On the one hand the monosyllabic affirmatives or distracted giggling of survivors thrown clear by the crash or the blast; on the other, the unsleeping testimony of the satellites, triumphantly affectless, seeming to exclude everything human from their diagrams of the dead-corpse fields, skull honeycombs. This was a new kind of conflict; *spasm war* and *unfettered war* and, unavoidably, *superwar* were among the buzzwords; *proxy war* because the world powers seeded it and tested weapons systems in it and kept each other busy with it. (Amis, 1989, p. 142)

The portrayal of a nuclear apocalypse is a crucial manifestation of doomsday displacement in postmodern literature; for Brian McHale “postmodernist writing has endeavored to represent the unrepresentable scene of nuclear apocalypse” (1992, p. 159). In this particular context, the efficacy of the sign in communicating meaning is deemed negligible due to the conviction that the actuality of the twentieth century is exceedingly daunting and severe, and its lack of regard for humanity is profoundly entrenched.

Notwithstanding other variables, it could be argued that *London Fields* serves as the definitive manual for unreliability in all respects with its multi-layered narrative. This characteristic of the novel is reminiscent of a trait commonly observed in postmodern fictional narrators, as explicated by Linda Hutcheon:

Another consequence of this far-reaching postmodern inquiry into the very nature of subjectivity is the frequent challenge to traditional notions of perspective, especially in narrative and painting. The perceiving subject is no longer assumed to a coherent, meaning-generating entity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate [...] or resolutely provisional and limited—often undermining their own seeming omniscience. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 11)

The postmodernist text's use of multiple narrators creates a sense of disorientation for the reader due to the lack of prominent indicators. Additionally, and is further compounded by the intricate layering of the narrative structure. The text, resembling

an enigmatic entity, contains within its profundities components that evade the comprehension of the reader, resulting in a lack of awareness regarding its fundamental nature. Similar to a true apocalypse, there exists no ultimate intervention capable of eliminating the prevalent tension. The perpetual quest for uncovering the concealed authenticity of a narrative encompasses various elements such as characters, settings, locations, language, and temporal context. The significance of this discovery and its destination is deemed insignificant. The reader engages in a pattern of concealing and revealing information. The act of fulfilling the commitment made at the denouement of a narrative to reveal the veracity of events bears resemblance to a non-religious mimicry of the Biblical discourse.

The most skeptical aspect of such narrative is that it questions the ability of conventional discourses to generate truth and knowledge because of the subject's awareness of their own isolation from the world and the inability of words to forge a connection between the subject and the object. As Jacques Derrida states that "all modern criticism and aesthetics" is regulated by "the absence [...] of divine sign":

To write is to know that the Book does not exist and that forever there are books, against which the meaning of the world not conceived by an absolute subject is shattered, before it has even become a unique meaning. [...] To write is also to be incapable of making meaning absolutely precede writing: it is thus to lower meaning while simultaneously elevating inscription. Meaning must await being said or written in order to inhabit itself, and in order to become, by differing from itself, what it is: meaning. (Derrida, 2002, p. 10)

Therefore, if the meaning is actualized through writing as Derrida suggests, the image of the literary author as a creative force becomes a problematic portrayal of the foundations of literary meaning. The author, thus, is trapped in absence, presence, and authority. For Andrew Bennet "the crisis that literary studies just is, just has to be, revolves around the question of what an 'author' is" (2005, p. 123). In classical poetics, the need for narrative on the principle of heteronomous ends is praised, as the rhetoric of the story is a means of knowing and convincing. However, at a certain conceptual level of postmodern criticism, the conflicts over textual authority appear to be peculiar to contemporary literary texts as a number of ways for literature to test its own literariness and numerous suggestions to re-establish authoritarian power structures that had been deemed ineffective. Thus, the novel has become a structure of control, where the narrative attempts to deconstruct through specific devices. The

question of the author's commitment to his text and the manipulative character of the implicated author remains unanswered, whether they are willing to manipulate the author.

In a Derridean sense, the fact that Amis does not reach an ultimate meaning to the story and provides multiple authors on the source not only makes the narrative of the novel unreliable but also shows that no text can be trusted. In an interview Amis claims that “what the reader should do is identify with the writer. You try and see what the writer is up to, what the writer is arranging, and what the writer's point is. Identify with the art, not the people” (Morrison 1990, p. 98). In this perspective, the only factor that makes people read fiction is the writer and reader's mutual appreciation of art. Amis aims to stimulate the reader with the environment of deterioration depicted in the novel and the absence of authority he has created. He let them convey new meanings in each reading. Consequently, throughout the narrative, Amis constructs morally reprehensible characters who reflect the immoral and dysfunctional culture in which they exist. In Amis's style, the reader appears to readily embrace the fusion of reality and a distinct form of fiction, conveyed through straightforward language. This is accompanied by a heightened awareness of a pervasive sense of apprehension characterizing the conclusion of the twentieth century. In spite of the evident contradiction, Amis's writing leaves the reader feeling unsettled. The disclosure that identifiable markers or orientation points are no longer present intensifies this state of unease. Amis's narrative effectively portrays the readers' apprehensions regarding the significance of literature in facilitating their comprehension of the world and influencing their personal moral, ethical, and aesthetic principles. Dern suggests that Amis's “stories dramatize these concerns”:

Amis hopes that literary images of the potential nuclear reality will cause people to reflect on the insanity to which they have become resigned as a normal part of daily life, a part that could quickly translate into instantaneous annihilation. (Dern, 2000, p. 97)

The objective of Amis is to stimulate readers to contemplate the illogicality of disregarding the tangible danger of nuclear warfare by means of literary portrayals of this peril. He aims to prompt readers to acknowledge the danger they face in their daily lives by depicting the threat in a prosaic yet compelling manner. In this way, Amis conveys an ideological point to the reader, wherein pornographic sex stories, degenerate morality, and homicides – even homicidal suicides or suicidal homicides

– are interwoven with apocalyptic omens of the end of the world. In the case of *London Fields*, Amis presents a perspective of an apocalyptic scenario that is primarily symbolic in nature, rather than literal. Furthermore, it serves as a harbinger of the decline of the principles and beliefs that have been prominent during the twentieth century. The issue of the twentieth century's tumultuous nature and the looming nuclear threat appears to be interconnected with both gender politics and the ongoing class struggle within British society.

Nevertheless, Bernard posits that the transformation of the fundamental nature of reality in contemporary times has rendered the predicament of writers such as Amis, who find themselves straddling the realms of fiction and realism, “no longer problematic” (1993, p. 123). She suggests that Amis reimagines “the mimetic tradition of fiction” (p. 122), highlighting the contemporary world’s self-alienation and feeling of loss via the use of excess and the subversion of figurative tropes. In the same vein, according to Amy J. Elias, though *London Fields* seem different from straight Realism – harder more metafictional, postmodern. [It] also more realistic than that of [postmodernists]” (1993, p. 9) which she calls “Postmodern Realism” (p. 17). Within this particular context, postmodern-realism serves to problematize the notion of reality, while simultaneously advocating for the perspective that reality is not inherently natural, a stance that is reminiscent of postmodern literature. However, unlike postmodern fiction, it endeavors to depict this artificial reality through a realist approach. *London Fields* appears to be suitable within this particular context. It offers a critical analysis of contemporary culture, with a particular emphasis on urban lifestyles and societal inequalities. The narrative centers on the common people and their routine predicaments, aspirations, and interpersonal connections. In this sense, it critically examines the societal stratification based on social class, gender disparities, and the impact of materialism on interpersonal relationships.

The novel’s portrayal of societal concerns aligns with the realist tradition of shedding light on and providing commentary on the world in its current state. The novel also presents genuine and authentic conversations that effectively capture the subtleties of linguistic expression. The discourse among the characters is reflective of their respective societal backgrounds, thereby amplifying the verisimilitude and credibility of their exchanges. Keith's speech, for instance, realistically reflects the low-life London vernacular. However, despite his unwavering personality, he alters

his language and even his tone when discussing topics such as darts, tabloids, or sports, adopting a style akin to that of a sportscaster, commentator, or sensationalist news headline. As per his perspective, TV is real, “‘TV,’ he thought, or ‘Modern reality’ or ‘The world’”. It was the world of TV that told him what the world was. How does all the TV time work on a modern person, a person like Keith?” (Amis, 1989, p. 55). In this sense, the novel highlights the fictitious quality of representation, reflecting Keith’s and modern society’s deep involvement in delusions and the insubstantial language of television. According to Amis, individuals in modern society are motivated by a postmodern quest for structure, as he tells Will Self:

What people are up to now is Post-Modernist, in the sense that they are loose beings in search of a form. And the art that they bring to this now, to shape their lives, is TV. In the nineteenth century, whatever it was, it wasn't TV. It might have been a penny dreadful, but it wouldn't have been a soap.

In conclusion, *London Fields* adopts a distinct narrative style that integrates diverse literary techniques and themes by fusing modernism, realism, and postmodernism. Amis makes use of postmodern techniques to deconstruct traditional narrative frameworks, thereby revealing the decay he perceives as inherent in modern society, thus, innovating the genre of fiction. His employment of non-linear plots, fragmented frameworks, and unreliable narrators as literary devices challenge the reader's preconceived notions and instill a sense of doubt regarding the authenticity of their knowledge. Amis elucidates the fragmented and disordered nature of contemporary existence through the dismantling of traditional narrative conventions. Amis’s comprehension of the deficiencies of contemporary culture and the degeneration caused by modernity enables him to depict an illustration of present-day existence and its inhabitants that strives to reflect the complexities and challenges of reality.

CHAPTER III

TIME'S ARROW, OR, THE NATURE OF OFFENSE (1991)

The use of reverse chronology holds a significant position within Amis's literary realm. In this context, it is noteworthy to remind that Amis even contemplated naming *London Fields* as *Time's Arrow* (1989, Note). Indeed, his use of reverse chronological order can be attributed to his perception that popular culture is closely interwoven with popular science, which represents a distinct cultural advancement. In the interview with Reynolds, Amis clarifies this correlation:

I'd been reading popular science, and reading about the arrow of time, and I'd been interested in that, and it's not a totally fanciful notion to turn back, to reverse the arrow of time, because certain theories now exploded about the fate of the universe include this idea of the big crunch when everything has been flung out by the big bang, but then the explosive force of that thrust weakens, and then gravity starts to pull everything back in. And many physicists have theorised about the possibility of time going backwards in that event, and light going backwards too. But a philosopher of the science friend said to me, 'Don't get into that, that's a can of worms for you. Just imagine it as a film going backwards.' (Reynolds, 2003).

Amis employs time inversion as a literary technique that is embedded with apocalyptic undertones as in *London Fields*. He perceives his generation as of the post-World War II period, which he posits as being fundamentally distinct from the pre-war period. Like other English authors of his time, he endeavours to convince his readers of the fragile condition of the world by tracing the historical origins that have led to its current path of self-annihilation. *Time's Arrow, Or, The Nature of Offense* (1991) demonstrates Amis's interest in revisiting historical events, particularly the Holocaust, which he regards as "the central event of the twentieth century" (Bellante, 1992, p. 16). In the Afterword of the novel, Amis expresses that he has taken the idea of reverse narrative from a specific paragraph of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) where Billy Pilgrim watches the Dresden bombing in

reverse (1991, p. 168). The passage depicts Billy Pilgrim watching the Dresden bombing in a reverse flowing documentary, wherein the planes are depicted as flying backwards and the bombs are seen being retracted into them. Amis's inverted narrative structure in *Time's Arrow* echoes this idea of observing events in reverse, thereby inducing a comparable sense of disorientation and questioning the conventional understanding of time. Vonnegut's protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, who is an American soldier and a war prisoner in World War II, "has come unstuck in time" (2005, p. 29) and experiences moments from his life in a non-linear fashion. The bombing of Dresden, which is depicted as a profoundly distressing occurrence, serves as a central theme within the novel. The portrayal of Billy Pilgrim's non-sequential experience of time in Vonnegut's work serves to underscore the chaotic characteristics of war and the resulting disorientation it induces. Despite the two novels adopt distinct perspectives on the notion of time, they both depict narratives that challenge conventional linear sequencing.

In *Time's Arrow*, Amis draws from collective memories of the Holocaust and incorporates his own imaginative style to construct a world that is not only unsettling on a physical level but also psychologically disquieting. The novel presents a reverse chronological account of a man who turns out to be a Nazi doctor who has never been apprehended but lived a miserable life of evasion. The narrative structure of the story is organized in a reverse chronological sequence, whereby the events are presented in backward order. Although the exact dates are not explicitly stated in the novel, the narrative unfolds in a retrograde timeline spanning most probably 1991, the year the novel was published, to 1916 which is assumed to be the birth year of the protagonist. The narrative commences with the narrator's emergence into existence subsequent to Tod T. Friendly's (later it is revealed that his original name is Odilo Unverdorben) death in a hospital setting, a physician is in the presence of fellow medical professionals while lying in a bed:

Presiding over the darkness out of which I had loomed there was a figure, a male shape, with an entirely unmanageable aura, containing such things as beauty, terror, love, filth, and above all power. This male shape or essence seemed to be wearing a white coat (a medic's stark white smock). And black boots. And a certain kind of smile. (Amis, 1991, p. 5)

The narrative structure of the story is presented in reverse chronological order, as the narrator guides the reader through Odilo's significant life events. Among

these events is a visit to Auschwitz¹² during World War II, where Odilo serves as a doctor under the Nazi regime and is involved in perpetrating numerous deaths under the supervision of Uncle Pepi who is reminiscent of Josef Mengele¹³ in every detail. At first, recognized as Tod T. Friendly, he subsequently adopts the name of John Young and endeavors to establish a profession in the medical field within the city of New York. Following this, he proceeds to move to Portugal and then Italy, where he assumes the alias Hamilton de Souza. In due course, he reaches Auschwitz, where he becomes a Nazi doctor and carries out multiple atrocities, as recounted in the narrator's retrospective narrative. As the narrative unfolds, it is understood that the narrator is Odilo's doppelgänger or "soul" (Amis, 1991a, p. 88) and cannot speak or directly intervene in events, only witnesses what Odilo has been through. Assuming the role of the narrator, he offers a metafictional observation regarding the novel's temporal-narrative structure by recounting the story of the protagonist whom he refers as "I" and whose true identity is yet to be disclosed in the text. Therefore, Michaela Praisler suggests that only the term "narrator-witness" (2017, p. 184) adequately captures the nature of such a narrator. Even the narrator-witness is confused by "the sequence of journey" thus far:

Wait a minute. Why am I walking backwards into the house? Wait. Is it dusk coming, or is it dawn? What is the – what is the sequence of the journey I'm on? What are its rules? Why are the birds singing so strangely? Where am I heading? (Amis, 1991, p. 6)

Here, the principal idea in reminding the reader that the text has a reversed temporal trajectory is to introduce the conclusion, or at minimum a portion of the conclusion, at the outset of the narrative as in *London Fields*. However, in contrast to *London Fields*, Amis places a greater emphasis on the reader's pre-existing knowledge in *Time's Arrow*. Amis's retrospective analysis of a Nazi criminal's life not only delves into historical events but also reinterprets them in the contemporary context.

3.1. Narrative Strategies in *Time's Arrow*

Time's Arrow serves as an illustration of the blend of historical events and fictional elements to produce a deep-seated narrative situated in a reversed reality.

¹² KL Auschwitz was the central extermination and concentration camp of Nazi Germany that has now become a symbol of terror, genocide, and the Shoah (the Holocaust) (www.auschwitz.org, para. 1).

¹³ SS physician Josef Mengele conducted inhumane, and often deadly, medical experiments on prisoners – especially on twins and children – at Auschwitz. He became the most notorious of the Nazi doctors who conducted experiments at the camp ("Josef Mengele", para. 3).

The novel exemplifies the tendency of postmodern writers to question the traditional understanding of time. Since the novel has metafictional elements within the subcategory of historical fiction, it can be regarded as “historiographic metafiction” (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 5). Hutcheon describes the terms as

Those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages. [...] In most of the critical work on postmodernism, it is narrative—be it in literature, history, or theory—that has usually been the major focus of attention. Historiographic metafiction incorporates all three of these domains: that is, its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (*historiographic metafiction*) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 5)

In terms of being “a human construct”, the deliberate application of reverse chronology in the novel emphasizes its constructed quality. In the Afterword, Amis provides insights into his inspiration and influence on creating an inverted narrative. This creating an inverted narrative technique appears to be employed to facilitate the readers. This further tackles the reader’s comprehensive understanding of the fictional world being depicted textuality of the novel’s realm. Through the implementation of these techniques, Amis effectively directs the reader’s focus towards the novel’s self-reflexivity, thereby stimulating contemplation regarding the intricate interplay between the realm of fiction and reality.

In the novel, Amis challenges the conventional concept of irreversibility in time and in a way responds to Nabokov’s assertion that “nobody can imagine in physical terms the act of reversing the order of time. Time is not reversible” (1974, p. 252). In this sense, the novel serves as an illustration of language’s capacity to articulate and convey concepts that may surpass our grasp in terms of physicality. The narrative is paradoxically revealed in a manner that is temporally inverted, with fragments being presented one by one, and Amis skilfully employing complex narrative techniques. Central to this narrative is an unusual entity, namely a newborn soul, “a childlike being who survives the death of its host” (Diedrick, 1995, p. 161). The narrative commences with the death of the central character, Odilo Unverdorben, and culminates with his inception to his mother’s womb. The selection of the surname Unverdorben, which translates to uncorrupted in the German, also functions as a skilfully employed metaphorical element within the novel. It conveys the notion that the protagonist, despite his initial association as a doctor under the Nazi regime,

experiences a distinct transformation as the narrative progresses in reverse chronological order.

In *Time's Arrow*, every small detail is presented in reverse chronological order, with individuals regressing in age as the story unfolds; children gradually diminish in size until they ultimately disappear into an enigmatic void. Motions occur backward, and the dialogues similarly reflect this pattern, like “the film running backward”:

Each day, when Tod and I are done with the *Gazette*, we take it back to the store. I have a good look at the dateline. And it goes like this. After October 2, you get October 1. After October 1, you get September 30. How do you figure *that*? . . . The mad are said to keep a film or stage set in their heads, which they order and art-decorate and move through. But Tod is sane, apparently, and his world is shared. It just seems to me that the film is running backward. (Amis, 1991, p. 8)

The temporal inversion, in this manner, serves as a technique for Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarization that “puts the brakes in [reader's] perception” (2017, p. 94). In his renowned essay “Art as a Device [Technique]”, he argues that by defamiliarizing the author eliminates the automatic nature of perception:

It is created with the explicit purpose of de-automatizing perception. Vision is the artist's goal; the artistic [object] is “artificially” created in such a way that perception lingers and reaches its greatest strength and length, so that the thing is experienced not spatially but, as it were, continually. (Shklovsky, 2017, p. 93)

In the same way, Amis's use of reverse chronological sequence compels the reader to engage with the story in an unconventional manner, disrupting their anticipation of a forward temporal progression. The conventional notion of time is called into question by the process of defamiliarization of the temporal structure, which prompts the reader to participate actively in the interpretation of the story. Thus, the reader is compelled to decipher the narrative as it progresses. The comprehensibility of the inverted world is attributed to its adherence to a set of rules and patterns. The novel's employment of a retrograde narrative initially appears to critique the forward progression of conventional novels. However, although it challenges conventional historical fiction's tendencies, it does not adopt the fragmented perspective of other postmodernist historical novels or historiographic metafiction. *Time's Arrow*, despite its reverse narrative, adheres to the conventional linear perspective of history. Even

though it employs a reverse chronological order, it progresses linearly without deviation like an arrow.

The adoption of the humorous narrative by Amis in the novel is observed to extend to linguistic levels, whereby even articulation of the conversations – phoneme by phoneme – is subjected to reversals. An illustrative instance arises when the main character, Odilo, known as Tod T. Friendly¹⁴ at the time, is portrayed engaging in the activity of purchasing hair lotion. The manifestation of time reversal can be observed through the analysis of the dialogue in reverse chronological order. The innovative employment of language in the novel, coupled with its reversal, reflects the overarching temporal framework, thereby contributing to the comedic and bewildering quality of the plot. The author's employment of phonemic reversal demonstrates Amis's precision in crafting a genuinely inverted realm in the novel:

“Dug. Dug,” says the lady in pharmacy. [“Good. Good.”]

“Dug,” I join in. “Oo y’rrah? [“Good,”] [How are you?]

“Aid u too y’rrah? [How are you today?]

“Mh-mm, [Mm-hm,] she’ll say, as she unwraps my hair lotion. I walk away, backward, with a touch of the hat. [...] To tell the truth, it took me quite a while to realize that the pitiable chirruping I heard all about me was, in fact, human speech. (Amis, 1991, p. 7)

Indeed, this particular dialogue in the novel is the sole instance where the phonetic flow of the dialogue is reversed, while the sequence of events, movements, and conversations remains in reverse chronological order throughout. Despite the reversal of human speech perceived by the narrator, for the remainder of the novel, the conversations are conveyed to the reader in traditional spelling of words and sounds, for pragmatic reasons. Amis's subversion of the linear progression of time presents a challenge to readers' expectations and provides a novel outlook on the construction of narrative. The reader is required to invert the word order in order to comprehend the narrative, as they are only accustomed to a forward narrative structure. By altering the sequence of sentences, the last one is now positioned at the beginning. Furthermore, the reader is expected to employ antonyms for certain terms, such as deploying “unwrap” instead of wrap or backward in place of forward. The

¹⁴ Although Odilo Unverdorben takes the aliases Tod T. Friendly, John Young, and Hamilton de Souza throughout the novel, for practical reasons, in the remainder of this chapter he will be referred to as Tod when his true identity is not mentioned.

narrator's realization that the "pitiable chirruping" is actually a form of human speech occurs only after a considerable amount of time has elapsed.

Seymour Chatman calls this kind of narrative "antonymizing" which he derives from the German term "Spiegelgeschichte"¹⁵:

From the structural point of view, it is important to understand what "Spiegelgeschichte" does not do. It reverses time, but it does not semantically reverse- or, as I shall term it- antonymize events. In other words, it doesn't turn "buy" into "sell" or "swallow" into "spit." [...] By "antonymizing" I mean the term in the broader rather than stricter sense: it includes not only antonymic pairs like "buy" and "sell" but any situation which is the opposite or at least quite different from what one might expect. (Chatman, 2009, p. 35)

Amis exhibits a high level of skill in the art of antonymizing, particularly in relation to verbs. For instance, a clerk may be observed to engage in the act of unwrapping a package, as opposed to wrapping it. Similarly, garbage trucks do not collect garbage in front of the houses, they leave garbage in front of the houses; the love affairs start with a fight and ends with a kiss; after sending the food back to the restaurant, people ask the waiter for the menu "to jog [their] memory" (Amis, 1991, p. 52). According to Chatman, what allows Amis to make use of antonymizing verbs so deftly is his subtle use of not only "*punctual* (perfective)" verbs, which are easy to antonize, but also "*durative* (imperfective)" verbs (2009, p. 37).

In this sense, the antonymizing of the verbs has the potential to elicit diverse outcomes beyond the reversal of the narrative sequence. In the novel, common verbs for expressing movements intentionally fail to adequately capture the nature of reversed motion:

I can't tell—and I need to know—whether Tod is kind. Or how unkind. He takes toys from children, on the street. He does. The kid will be standing there, [...] Tod'll come on up. The toy, the squeaky duck or whatever, will be offered to him by the smiling child. Tod takes it. And backs away, with what I believe is called a shit-eating grin. The child's face turns blank or closes. Both toy and smile are gone: he takes both toy and smile. Then he heads for the store, to cash it in. For what? A couple of bucks. Can you believe this guy? He'll take candy from a baby, if there's fifty cents in it for him. (Amis, 1991, pp. 14-15)

In this instance, Tod's withdrawal after taking the child's toy and selling it to a store could be interpreted as his entering a store, purchasing a toy, and giving it to the

¹⁵ "Mirror story" in German.

child. However, Amis employs the phrase “back away” as an inversion of the expression “walk forward” rather than “walk backwards” which may be regarded as the more accurate inversion of the action. In contrast to the act of walking backward, the verb “back away” conveys a predominantly negative connotation. The act of backing away may be attributed to an excessive amount of fear or feelings of shame. Again, the act of Tod’s approaching the kid with a smile on his face in the forward flow of time is reversed as “a shit-eating grin”. The choice of words suggests that there is an implicit meaning that conveys unrecognized distress and unease. This may be interpreted as a subplot that foreshadows Tod’s traumatic history which will gradually unravel throughout the course of the novel. This subplot is highly relevant as it pertains to Tod’s inner turmoil stemming from his past as a Nazi.

Nonetheless, this unconventional linguistic approach is consistent with the overall narrative style, in which the narrator undertakes the role of a guide, providing readers with a thorough comprehension of the complexities of a reversed realm. Early in the novel, the narrator provides detailed explanations of the daily events in the inverted universe, as if providing the reader with a reading guide. Thus, he employs precise and comprehensive terminology that exceeds the typical conventions of narrative. The additional focus on detail aims to enhance the reader’s comprehension of the novel’s inverted plot and facilitate navigation of its eccentric structure:

Eating is unattractive too. First I stack the clean plates in the dishwasher, [...] then you select a soiled dish, collect some scraps from the garbage, and settle down for a short wait. Various items get gulped up into my mouth, and after skillful massage with tongue and teeth I transfer them to the plate for additional sculpture with knife and fork and spoon. That bit's quite therapeutic at least, unless you're having soup or something, which can be a real sentence. Next you face the laborious business of cooling, of reassembly, of storage, before the return of these foodstuffs to the Superette, [...] Then you tool down the aisles, with trolley or basket, returning each can and packet to its rightful place. (Amis, 1991a, p. 11)

This constant process of filtering and interpreting textual content by the reader, as if they were given a reading manual – since otherwise, the novel would be unreadable – serves to emphasize the fictional nature of the novel as a literary creation.

In contrast to conventional historical fiction that endeavours to simulate an unfiltered depiction of reality, *Time’s Arrow* overtly acknowledges its status as a

constructed text. The adoption of an inverted temporal arrangement in the novel challenges traditional sequential storytelling frameworks and prompts the reader to pause and think through the strategies employed in its composition. Thus, the novel's demonstration of self-reflexivity is in line with the characteristics of metafiction, as it draws attention to its own construction and challenges established narrative norms. The novel, in this context, displays the attributes of Hutcheon's definition of historiographic metafiction:

Its theoretical self-awareness of history and fiction as human constructs (historiographic metafiction) is made the grounds for its rethinking and reworking of the forms and contents of the past. [...] It is not just metafictional; nor is it just another version of the historical novel or the non-fictional novel. [...] [It is] both metafictionally self-reflexive and yet speaking to us powerfully about real political and historical realities. (Hutcheon, 1988, p. 5)

Accordingly, the novel self-reflexively acknowledges its own construction through the Soul's ironic comments on the conversations he witnesses. He finds out that the conversations make more sense when read backward, with one notable exception: "man-woman stuff" (Amis, 1991, p. 51). He observes that the dialogues between Tod and the women possess significance irrespective of their chronological order. The dialogues do not advance the narrative whether read forwards or backwards, "you could run them any way you liked—and still get no further forward":

"Please. You can sleep over."

"This is goodbye, Tod."

"Beth," he'll say. Or Trudy or whatever.

"It just doesn't sit well with me anymore."

"Give me one more chance." (Amis, 1991, pp. 51-52)

Tod repeatedly begs the woman to refrain from going, both at the beginning and the end of his speech, without having any apparent effect on the conversation's content or direction. The sarcastic perspective of the narrator on the structure of the dialogues, once more, serves to emphasize the fictionality of the novel.

The conversations between men and women are not the sole instances unaffected by the direction of the flow of time. The narrator somehow interprets the conversations, however, is not able to solve the mystery lying behind the artistic creations, most specifically, books and paintings. He expresses a sense of perplexity

towards them, as he struggles to fully comprehend the appropriate manner in which to engage with them. He says, “apart from words denoting motion or process, which always have me reaching for my inverted commas [...] the written language makes plain sense, unlike the spoken” (Amis, 1991, p. 9). In the same sense, the artwork he encounters during a date of Tod’s in the Metropolitan Museum provides a parallel observation of the construction of the narrative. The narrator observes the paintings on the walls and compares them to writing, noting that both suggest a world where time may move in a different direction:

Like writing, paintings seem to hint at a topsy-turvy world in which, so to speak, time’s arrow moves the other way. The invisible speedlines suggest a different nexus of sequence and process. That thought again. It always strangely disquiets me. I wonder: is this the case with all the arts? (Amis, 1991a, p. 87)

This, again, self-reflexively suggests that writing, like paintings, is a constructed art form, highlighting the predominantly fictional nature of a novelist’s intricately crafted world. Despite the fact that every object in this reversed realm appears identical to its counterpart in the real world, the way they are experienced is drastically different. The novel challenges the tendency of conventional fiction to create a false sense of reality. It subverts the notion that the narrative constructed by the novelist is an accurate reflection of the historical past, highlighting the artificial nature of storytelling and the subjective nature of interpretation.

The unique characterization of the narrator also distinguishes the novel from the norm of historical fiction. Within conventional narratives, the narrator is commonly depicted as a cohesive entity who possesses impartial knowledge regarding historical occurrences and delivers an unbiased portrayal of events. In the case of *Time’s Arrow*, however, the narrator assumes a distinct role and questions the established conventions of narration. The narrator has a very different perspective, the flow of time is reversed for him. In this setting, the narrator’s introspection extends to his own entity and his connection to Tod, evoking the renowned inquiry of Descartes, “I know that I exist; the question is, what is this ‘I’ that I know?” (1996, p. 17).

Despite being new-born and still learning, he possesses an innate understanding that the current circumstances are abnormal, leading him to a struggle in making sense of it “The world won’t start making sense. It’s certainly the case that

I appear to be hitched up with Tod like this, but he's not to know I'm here. And I'm lonely..." (Amis, 1991, p. 29). The narrator experiences a sense of detachment while inhabiting Tod's physical form, which leads to a struggle and frustration with the limitations imposed by the corporeal body. Moreover, this sentiment conveys the notion that the narrator, despite his meticulous attempts to comprehend and rationalize his surroundings, experiences a sense of incapacity in achieving cohesive or significant comprehension.

The narrator's understanding of the world is flawed and incomplete. Although he is not "a complete innocent" and "equipped with a fair amount of value-free information or general knowledge" (Amis, 1991, p. 8), he lacks accurate insight and is uncertain about his own identity and age, leaving the reader with ambiguous information. He even questions whether other people possess a similar internal presence as him, referring to himself as a "passenger or parasite" (Amis, 1991, p. 8; p. 63). In this sense, the narrator is like a "double-goer" (Diedrick, 1995, p. 162) inhabitant of Tod who lacks control over Tod's actions and experiences:

I kept wanting to relax and take a good look at the garden – but something isn't quite working. Something isn't quite working: this body I'm in won't take order from this will of mine. Look around, I say. But his neck ignores me. His eyes have their own agenda. (Amis, 1991a, p. 6)

The passage displays a sense of emotional disengagement and exasperation felt by the narrator, who is confined within Tod's corporeal body. This kind of portrayal of the narrator in the novel disrupts the conventional role of a reliable and authoritative narrator found in traditional historical fiction. Instead, the novel raises questions about the nature of identity, control, and the dubious nature of subjective experience. The reader is persistently tasked with providing an accurate account of the past that Tod endeavours to keep hidden, and that the narrator constantly misinterprets, placing the reader in a dilemma where they must opt for one of two identities. Furthermore, the inclusion of self-rejection in these two identities amplifies the narrative's lack of dependability. According to Maya Slater, the narrator is not completely honest with the reader, he guides and more often misguides the reader to reach his desired point, she says:

At such moments we are induced to laugh at the Narrator, or alternatively to wonder at his failure of understanding, rather than finding his surroundings bewildering or distressing [...]

sometimes he is a sophisticated observer who knows his situation, while at other times he plays the uncomprehending innocent. [...] In his more lucid moments, the Narrator is well aware that language has to be used in a special way to render his surroundings. (Slater, 1993, p. 146)

As a matter of fact, as Richard Menke asserts “Interpreting life backward, this fictional soul is a supremely reliable narrator; he may be relied upon to get things [...] poignantly wrong” (1998, p. 960). Although he finds it eerie, the narrator full-heartedly accepts with a disconcerting insight into the realm beyond mortal existence that Tod’s patients leave the examination room “with their eyes wide. Pausing only to do that creepy thing— knocking, quietly, on [the] door” (Amis, 1991a, p. 20). In a world where time operates in a retrograde manner, the narrator maintains a steadfast forward perspective, persistently scrutinizing every detail. The narrator’s grasp of the retrograde flow of time leads to his comprehension of the tendency for individuals to knock on a door subsequent to their departure from a room or “a wounded finger healed and sealed by the knife’s blade”:

Intellectually I can just about accept that violence is salutary, that violence is good. But I can find nothing in me that assents to its ugliness. [...] A child's breathless wailing calmed by the firm slap of the father's hand, a dead ant revived by the careless press of a passing sole, a wounded finger healed and sealed by the knife's blade: anything like that made me flinch and veer. But the body I live and move in, Tod's body, feels nothing. (Amis, 1991a, p. 26)

Here the narrator possesses a theoretical comprehension that violence may have a transformative or redemptive effect. However, on a deeper level, he struggles to reconcile this intellectual acceptance with his instinctive response to the repulsiveness of violence. The instances he mentions, such as the father’s slap, reviving a dead ant, or healing a wounded finger, seem to evoke discomfort and aversion instead of sympathy. The narrator’s temporal orientation toward his future in a retrograde world creates a perplexing experience for him.

A sardonic sense of humour is achieved via the narrator's misinterpretation of Tod's occupation as a doctor. Tod earns his livelihood by intentionally causing harm to other people, this revelation of Tod’s doctoring is entirely appalling for the narrator. The narrator perceives doctors as agents of violence who inflict injuries on patients and subsequently rely on the natural course of events to facilitate healing. He describes what they do in a comical way:

Some guy comes in with a bandage around his head. We don't mess about. We'll soon have that off. He's got a hole in his head. So what do we do? We stick a nail in it. Get the nail—a good rusty one—from the trash or wherever. And lead him out to the Waiting Room where he's allowed to linger and holler for a while before we ferry him back to the night. Already we're busy with this bag lady we've got, welding sock and shoe plastic onto the soles of her evil feet. . . . When we're done with the bad ones, we can't wait to get them out of here. Gangway. It doesn't matter. There's always more. (Amis, 1991a, p. 76)

Although Tod appears unaffected, the narrator undergoes significant emotional distress, manifesting in both psychological and physiological repulsion, and making an effort to avert his gaze from the injurious actions performed by the medical practitioners. He questions if there is a concerted effort to wage war against “health, life, and love” (Amis, 1991a, p. 93) in hospitals. The narrator’s aversion towards medical procedures is evident through his manner of expressing disapproval, “I'm tired of being human, if human is what I am. I'm tired of being human” (p. 93).

Even though the adoption of the time reversal in the novel yields a somewhat humorous outcome, its underlying objective is to heighten cognizance and mindfulness regarding the atrocities of the Holocaust. In this sense, Amis draws on the reader’s fundamental understanding of World War II and the Holocaust to engage with the text. Although the temporal intervals are not explicitly stated in the novel, the narrator perceives a looming evil as the advent of war draws near, yet its nature eludes his comprehension:

He is traveling toward his secret. Parasite or passenger, I am traveling there with him. It will be bad. It will be bad, and not intelligible. But I will know one thing about it (and at least the certainty brings comfort): I will know how bad the secret is. I will know the nature of the offense. Already I know this. I know that it is to do with trash and shit, and that it is wrong in time. (Amis, 1991a, p. 63)

Here, the narrator’s premonition can be interpreted as an omen of the imminent horror of the Holocaust. This instance is also significant as it presents the sole usage of the phrase “the nature of offense” in the novel, which serves as the novel’s secondary title and alludes to Italian writer and Holocaust survivor Primo Levi. In the “Afterword”, Amis says that he derives the alternative title of the novel from Levi’s memoir *If This Is A Man* (1958). For the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazis, Levi writes that “our language lacks words to express this offense, the demolition of a man” (1958, p. 19). Subsequently, in an interview, Amis posits that the more he

reads about the Holocaust and Hitler, the more he drifts away from understanding them; however, one of Levi's statements regarding the Holocaust serves as "an epiphany for [him]" (Rosenbaum, 2012, para. 14) relieving the burden on writing about the subject. What Levi asserts is that "one cannot—what is more, one must not—understand what happened, because to understand is almost to justify" (1986, para. 33). The expression "the nature of offense" could potentially evoke a connection with Levi's viewpoint within the framework of the novel. The narrator's journey towards a hidden truth involves an incomprehensible transgression or violation. The inability to comprehend or express the functioning of the world corresponds with Levi's notion that certain actions surpass human comprehension.

Within this particular context, however, an inquiry arises regarding the narrator's identity as Tod's soul: how is the narrator unable to comprehend functioning of the world specifically given that he is experiencing it for the second time? As a matter of fact, for the narrator, "the world is going to make sense" (Amis, 1991a, p. 115) in Auschwitz. In this sense, it is appropriate to point out Robert Jay Lifton's analysis of the psyche of Nazi doctors since Amis states in the "Afterword" of the novel that he was heavily influenced by Lifton's work *The Nazi Doctors* (1986) in the creation of *Time's Arrow* (1991, p. 167). Lifton's psychological examination emphasizes that "the SS doctor was deeply involved in the stark contradictions of 'schizophrenic situation'" (1986, p. 210) to comprehend the presence of Auschwitz and comparable acts of atrocity. Thus, for Lifton, it is plausible that the Nazis had the ability to dissociate their psyches into two discrete components: one that embodied their conventional persona and the other that delineated their affiliation with fascist agents of genocide which Lifton calls "Auschwitz self – a self that, in violating his own prior moral standards, met with no effective resistance and in fact made use of his original skills (in this case, medical-scientific)" (pp. 420-421).

Considering Lifton's theory, in a temporal setting that progresses forward, the preservation of a cohesive personality for Odilo, as a Nazi doctor, necessitates the split and separate facets of the self in Auschwitz. Nevertheless, within the framework of the novel's narrative inversions, this division ultimately results in the integration of those disjointed components. This denotes a significant alteration in the psychological composition of the narrator. The parts that take place in Auschwitz

exhibit a significant shift in both the linguistic style employed by the narrator and his overall viewpoint presented. Until arriving in Auschwitz, despite the coexistence of the narrator and Tod within the same physical entity, the narrative is conveyed from a third-person perspective by the narrator. He uses the first-person pronouns “I/me” to refer to himself and the third-person pronouns “he/him” to refer to Tod, and sometimes he refers to both as “we”:

Tod moaned, and straightened before the dark mirror, and he reached for the switch. Easy does it, I thought. It *would* have to happen at the speed of light. Steady now. Here goes . . . I expected to look like shit but this was ridiculous. Jesus. We really *do* look like shit. [...] his hair lay thin over the orange-peel scalp, in white worms. (Amis, 1991a, p. 10)

The utilization of this particular narrative technique establishes a clear dichotomy between the two distinct personas. However, as the narrative unfolds in Auschwitz, the two distinct characters gradually converge into a singular entity, and the previously employed third-person perspective is supplanted by the first-person point of view, as embodied by Tod’s original identity, Odilo Unverdorben. The chapter featuring Auschwitz commences with the declaration that the world starts to make sense and employs the first-person pronoun “I” to denote both the narrator and Odilo, as evidenced by the opening phrase “I, Odilo Unverdorben, arrived in Auschwitz” (Amis, 1991a, p. 116).

An illustrative occurrence of history’s ambivalent essence emerges in during Odilo’s engagement with Auschwitz. Within the inverted temporal realm of the novel, the narrator naively depicts the Nazi concentration camp as a sanctuary epitomizing benevolence and empathy. Within this distorted view, the Nazis assumes the role of dismantling Jewish settlements, orchestrating the repatriation of Jews to their abodes, and endowing them with personal aid, all in service of facilitating their reunification. The narrator posits this ostensibly humane endeavour as a necessary responsibility, aiming to harmonize a fragmented Germany, effectuate national restoration, and resurrect communal vitality, he says “this was our mission, after all: to make Germany whole. To heal her wounds and make her whole” (Amis, 1991a, p. 141). However, Odilo’s perception diverges substantially from the narrator’s naïveté and miscomprehension, perceiving this opportunity not as an avenue for humanitarianism, but rather as a conduit for the systematic extermination of the Jewish populace. This dissonance underscores the inherent disparity in the

interpretations of historical events encapsulated within the narrative framework of the novel. The narrator's perspective mistakenly distorts the deeds of Nazis and Odilo's profession, presenting their crimes as justifiable. The misaligned temporal order renders the violent creation of people, through the Holocaust, more sensible than their brutal decimation for the narrator. Furthermore, this distortion sacrifices the overall comprehensibility of the narrative, as the narratorial perspective seeks to reframe Nazi ideals as a form of positive birth and recasts "genocide as genesis" (Menke, 1998, p. 964).

Auschwitz, where the Nazis create Jews, runs flawlessly in sync with the forward perspective of the narrator. Thus, such a setting fosters the narrator's identification himself with Odilo, "It was I, Odilo Unverdorben, who personally removed the pellets of Zyklon B and entrusted them to the pharmacist in his white coat" (Amis, 1991a, p. 121). In the novel's inverted narrative, Auschwitz is revealed to be a manufacturing facility where millions of Jews are produced under the watchful eye of physicians like Odilo. The narrator juxtaposes the supposedly life-affirming qualities of medical treatment within concentration camps with what he perceives as the "atrocious-producing situation" (Amis, 1991a, p. 92) of conventional medicine. The portrayal of Auschwitz as an enigmatic place where extraordinary events occurred such as medical necromancy is evident. The physicians at the camp are highly regarded and esteemed to the point of being sacred. Nevertheless, the narrator characterizes the procedure as straightforward albeit repulsive:

Creation is easy. Also ugly. *Hier ist kein warum*¹⁶ Here there is no why. Here there is no when, no how, no where. Our preternatural purpose? To dream a race. To make a people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire. (Amis, 1991a, p. 120)

The declaration of lack of interrogative expressions especially "*Hier ist kein warum*", which is another allusion to Levi, implies a disconnection from ethical reasoning or accountability of the acts that take place in the camp. The reversed narrative blurs the boundaries between creation and destruction thereby presenting the atrocities committed during the Holocaust as a misguided form of creation. The narrator's use of language pertaining to the revival of Jews is unsettling, as it indicates a flawed understanding of the ongoing genocidal actions. His perspective conforms to the

¹⁶ Emphasis original.

retrograde chronology, wherein the causal sequence is reversed, leading to distorted comprehension of ethical ramifications.

Despite the narrator's profound admiration for the methodical revival of individuals in Auschwitz and Odilo's involvement in this particular issue, the narrator experiences a renewed sense of unease towards Odilo and his occupation upon his arrival at Schloss Hartheim¹⁷:

What was wrong? What was the matter? Were the ovens malfunctioning? Was the Chamber faulty? Because the people we produced just weren't any good anymore. All the wizardry and delirium, all the insomnia and diarrhea of Auschwitz—it was failing. Yes, that's right: the wards, the examination rooms, the silent gardens of Schloss Hartheim were heavy with a sense of failing magic. At first the patients really weren't that bad. Some little defect. Clubfoot. Cleft palate. But later they were absolutely hopeless. (Amis, 1991a, p. 145)

The narrator's tolerance towards Odilo has diminished due to his involvement in the creation of individuals who are either physically incapacitated or psychologically unstable in Schloss Hartheim. The people produced in Auschwitz have elicited a sense of contentment within the narrator, and the operational efficiency of the camp is striking. However, now he says, "you shouldn't be doing any of this kind of thing with human beings" (p. 147). As a result, the narrative concludes with a return to the initial state of affairs, wherein the narrator and Odilo are once again separated. The narrator henceforth employs the pronoun "he" to denote Odilo, while employing "I" to refer to himself.

As the imminent war approaches, or rather, as it recedes in this inverted reality, the narrator experiences a revived sense of confusion and disorientation, as "the world has stopped making sense again" (Amis, 1991a, p. 149). In the novel, Amis adeptly integrates the perspectives of the narrator and Odilo, underscoring the stark contrasts between historical documentation and subjective interpretation throughout the narrative. The depiction of the historical perspective is disordered and unappealing. In this complex exposition, Odilo embodies a perspective that is both broken and distressed. He exhibits no sympathy towards the Jewish community and plays a pivotal role in their extermination. In contrast, with regard to the Jewish

¹⁷ Schloss Hartheim was utilized by the Nazi regime as one of the execution sites for Aktion T4, a program that conducted large-scale sterilizations and killings of individuals deemed socially undesirable by the German government, particularly those with physical and mental disabilities ("Euthanasia Program and Aktion T4," n.d.).

community, the narrator portrays a perspective that could be characterized by a sense of affection. Irrespective of their personal identities, the narrator harbours sympathy for them and desires their prosperous existence and emotional fulfilment:

I am childless; but the Jews are my children and I love them as a parent should, which is to say that I don't love them for their qualities (remarkable as these seem to me to be, naturally), and only wish them to exist, and to flourish, and to have their right to life and love. (Amis, 1991a, p. 152)

The narrator serves as a sentimental representation of Odilo's fragmented personality, and thus, takes a stance against Odilo's actions. Odilo is portrayed as lacking in compassion, yet the narrator's emotional alignment remains unaltered. The unwavering dedication of Odilo to his responsibilities at the concentration camp is prominently exhibited as he dismisses the suspicions of Herta regarding the validity of what he does in Auschwitz (Amis, 1991a, pp. 132-133). Odilo does not question the ethical conduct and legitimacy of his task. Notwithstanding Odilo's apparent absence of remorse, through three-year-old Odilo's curiosity, the narrator employs a metaphorical comparison between chickens and ducks to convey a profound sense of anguish regarding the atrocious acts committed by the Nazis:

"Mummy? Chickens are alive. We catch them and burn them—and then they're dead! But you can't eat chicks. Not little good chicks. Because chicks are good. You can just stroke them and everything. But you *can* eat ducks. Because ducks are fat." Wait. Mistake there. Mistake. Category . . . We brang. We putten. We brang, we putten, their own selves we taken all away. Why so many children and babies? What got into us? Why so many? We were cruel: the children weren't even going to be here for very long. I choiced it, did I? Why? Because babies are fat? . . . (Amis, 1991a, pp. 163-164)

On their way to total disappearance, the narrator, realizing that time is actually flowing backwards during all this time he has spent with Odilo, becomes fully aware of every deed Odilo has committed, but it is either too late or too early for him to change everything:

When Odilo closes his eyes, I see an arrow fly—but wrongly. Point first. Oh no, but then . . . We're away once more, over the field. Odilo Unverdorben and his eager heart. And I within, who came at the wrong time—either too soon, or after it was all too late. (Amis, 1991a, p. 165)

Time's Arrow explores the complex concept of denial and destruction as potential drivers of creativity and rejuvenation. Bakhtin defines the carnivalistic life

as “a life drawn out of its *usual* rut, it is to some extent “life turned inside out,” “the reverse side of the world” (*monde a l'envers*)” (1984b, p. 122). In the same sense, the novel presents a perspective of the Holocaust through the lens of an ignorant narrator, who portrays the horrific landscape as a macabre carnival. While Amis makes clear that he has no intention of diminishing the gravity of the Holocaust (Guardian Book Club, 2010), Amis portrays Odilo’s anguish as a means of absolving himself from culpability for his prior deeds. Through the utilization of negation as an emblematic feature of Bakhtinian carnival (Bakhtin, 1984b, p. 125), Amis delves into the intrinsic duality of human existence. This duality is characterized by the notion that birth is accompanied by the looming presence of death, while death, in turn, presents the possibility of new beginnings. The manifestation of divergent perspectives is also apparent in the contradicting perspectives of the narrator and Odilo. Amis employs an unconventional narrative structure and subverts conventional moral norms pertaining to the Nazis in order to address and ultimately surpass the enduring repercussions of the calamities of history.

3.2. Temporal Experiments in *Time’s Arrow*

The notion of inverted time can be traced back to the works of Plato, specifically *The Statesman* (or *The Dialogues*) which was written around 360 BC. Plato presents the concept of the sun’s withdrawal, the myth of Atreus, and the belief that humans originated from the earth instead of procreation. He posits a binary motion of the cosmos, encompassing a retrograde motion that facilitates a reversal of the aging process, whereby elderly individuals exhibit rejuvenated physical characteristics and bodies revert to a state of infancy:

[...] the bodies of youths in their prime grew softer and smaller, continually by day and night returning and becoming assimilated to the nature of a newly-born child in mind as well as body; in the succeeding stage they wasted away and wholly disappeared. And the bodies of those who died by violence at that time quickly passed through the like changes, and in a few days were no more seen. (Plato, ca. 360 BC/1932, p. 469)

Plato’s mythological account portrays the reversal as an inherent aspect of a comprehensive cycle, wherein the world, having attained its culmination, instinctively reverts to its initial state. In essence, the retrograde motion represents not only a reversal but a fundamental component of temporal dynamics, as opposed to a regressive advancement of organisms.

Time's Arrow is a unique example in literature as it progresses in reverse chronological order without any exception. The appeal of the narrative resides in the interpretation of the authentic import of the protagonist's conduct whose existence unravels backward in time. Amis addresses the intricacies of the inverted narrative by assigning a secondary consciousness to his character, who serves as the narrator and accurately reports the unfolding events. Odilo's actions from personal interactions to the infliction of suffering in Auschwitz, are characterized in a retrograde manner. The temporal inversion possesses the potential to unravel the atrocities of the concentration camps, restoring them to a previous state. Additionally, it offers an opportunity to explore Odilo's past, his trajectory toward Nazism, and the possibility of redemption through the purity of rebirth.

The term "time's arrow" was introduced by British astrophysicist Arthur Eddington, who derived the phrase from Zeno of Elea's paradox of time, or arrow paradox¹⁸, to denote the concept of the irreversible nature of time:

Let us draw an arrow arbitrarily. If as we follow the arrow we find more and more of the random element in the state of the world, then the arrow is pointing towards the future; if the random element decreases the arrow points towards the past. That is the only distinction known to physics. This follows at once if our fundamental contention is admitted that the introduction of randomness is the only thing which cannot be undone. I shall use the phrase "time's arrow" to express this one-way property of time which has no analogue in space. It is a singularly interesting property from a philosophical standpoint. We must note that— (1) It is vividly recognised by consciousness. (2) It is equally insisted on by our reasoning faculty, which tells us that a reversal of the arrow would render the external world nonsensical. (Eddington, 1929, p. 70)

According to Menke, in *Time's Arrow* Amis has created "a darkly thermodynamic vision of history" (1998, p. 961) in which the retrograde effect is produced through the reversal of the trajectory of the arrow of the second law of thermodynamic time. According to the second law of thermodynamics, the progression of time is regulated by the augmentation of entropy within an enclosed system. In brief, it expresses that events in nature have a tendency to transition from a condition of organization or reduced entropy to a condition of chaos or heightened

¹⁸ A number of paradoxes attributed to Zeno have been preserved in Aristotle's *Physics*. He cites, "If everything when it occupies an equal space is at rest at that instant of time, and if that which is in locomotion is always occupying such a space at any moment, the flying arrow is therefore motionless at that instant of time and at the next instant of time but if both instants of time are taken as the same instant or continuous instant of time then it is in motion" ("Physics by Aristotle", para. 57).

entropy. In *A Brief History of Time*, Stephen Hawking explains the restrictive nature of the second law of thermodynamics in relation to Eddington's arrow of time:

[I]n any closed system disorder, or entropy, always increases with time. [...] An intact cup on the table is a state of high order, but a broken cup on the floor is a disordered state. One can go readily from the cup on the table in the past to the broken cup on the floor in the future, but not the other way round. The increase of disorder or entropy with time is one example of what is called an arrow of time, something that distinguishes the past from the future, giving a direction to time. (Hawking, 1988, p. 72)

In this sense, the employment of reversed chronological narrative technique in *Time's Arrow* aptly reflects the inverse progression of entropy as defined by the second law. Amis challenges the traditional notion of the temporal arrow by depicting a universe in which increasingly established conditions ensue from chaotic ones. Amis portrays a reality in which "Destruction is difficult. Destruction is slow. Creation [...] is no trouble at all" (1991a, p. 19). This presents a notable disparity from the physical reality, wherein cups that fall and shatter do not exhibit the extraordinary ability to spontaneously reconstitute themselves on surfaces. Through the adoption of "time's arrow" as the title of the novel, Amis effectively highlights the profound sense of powerlessness that individuals experience when confronted with the enormity of historical atrocities.

The novel's retrospective approach emphasizes the Jews' post-Auschwitz reverence for *Zakhor* (Hebrew for remember), which holds significance throughout the narrative. As a matter of fact, in an interview, Amis tells Will Self that he thinks "the Germans should have a few centuries more to meditate on what they did in the Second World War" (1995, p. 153), however, the new generation tends to dissociate themselves from assuming accountability for the transgressions perpetrated by Nazi Germany. The gravity of their transgression against the notion of national identity is of such magnitude that it prompts skepticism regarding their ability to reconstitute as a cohesive nation. The new generation is solely fixated on the present, lacking a sense of context. Amis makes clear that this detachment from time and the absence of a moral framework seems to liberate them, leaving them unbound by ethical considerations, he says, "They are fixed in time, with no present and no future" (Self, 1995, p. 153).

Ann Parry has posited that the act of writing after, and further expounding upon the Holocaust is intricately linked to the concept of “caesura” (1999, p. 249). The notion of caesura indicates a profound rupture that demands a reassessment of diverse facets of human beings in the aftermath of the Holocaust. It poses a disruption to conventional interpretations of history, malevolence, and the inherent characteristics of humanity. Furthermore, it implies that artistic expression may be among the limited means of conveying the enormity of anguish and attesting to the incomprehensible. Parry expands this idea by drawing upon the views of Theodor Adorno, Jean-François Lyotard, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe on the subject. Adorno’s initial assertion that composing poetry “after Auschwitz is barbaric” (1962, p. 8) was based on the belief that aesthetic principles could potentially undermine the true horror of the Holocaust. However, his viewpoint evolved over time, in *Negative Dialectic*, he acknowledged that “not even silence gets us out of the circle” (1973, p. 367) and thus art can provide comfort and serve as a means of expression without causing harm. Nevertheless, the cognitive approach employed by the artist must be modified when addressing the Holocaust. In this regard, the perspective of Lacoue-Labarthe holds significant importance. For him, the caesura can be created in two distinct manners. Firstly, it can be formed as a “pure event” (1990, p. 44) that signifies the tragic suffering of humanity in which only the dimensions of time and space persist; secondly, it can be created by an interruption of “an attempt at immediacy – i.e., the Law of finitude” (p. 45). He claims:

In the case of Auschwitz [...] these two conditions are, as sinister sound the phrase has it, ‘satisfied’. And this is so far the only time, I believe, in modern history, (this is why Auschwitz opens up, or closes, a quite other history than the one we have known up until now). [...] Auschwitz is the site of dissociation. (Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990, p. 45)

In the same way, Amis dissociates *Time’s Arrow* by inverting the chronological flow, what he creates is “a quite other history” as Lacoue-Labarthe suggests. The narrative’s deviation from the conventional forward sequence compels the reader to relinquish their habitual mode of comprehending occurrences. The conventional framework, which presupposes a forward and consistent comprehension of temporality, has been destabilized. The implementation of this particular narrative technique engenders a feeling of disorientation and cognitive challenge, as the reader is required to adapt their viewpoint and re-evaluate the sequence of events occurring in reverse chronological order. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that this particular

method of narration prompts the reader to reassess their comprehension of the present, while also re-examining their perspective regarding the Holocaust. Through the subversion of traditional temporal sequencing, the novel instigates a process of reimagining historical events and compels the reader to confront the significant disruption brought about by the Holocaust, thereby necessitating a reconsideration of comprehension of time and the human condition. The reader is presented with a concealed reality due to a retrogressive temporal progression that the narrator may either lack knowledge of or endeavour to darken. Therefore, the responsibility of determining “the nature of the offense” is bestowed upon the reader.

The narrator possesses a surface-level understanding of the presence of temporal inversion within the world around him. For instance, early in the novel, he is baffled by the way the world functions, “Wait a minute. Why am I walking backward into the house? [...] What is the – what is the sequence of the journey I’m on? What are its rules? Where am I heading?” (Amis, 1991a, p. 6). Nevertheless, this challenging reversal of the order of events, especially in terms of cause and effect, is beyond his ability to cope with. The narrator displays the inability of interpreting a sequence of interrelated events that transpired within a single day due to the distortion of conventional temporal order. The temporal order of events holds importance as their interpretation and cause-and-effect relation are dependent upon the chronological sequence in which they are arranged. Thus, the narrator erroneously interprets the unfolding circumstances due to a modification in their temporal arrangement, as evidenced by his attribution of benevolence and triumph to operations undertaken in Auschwitz, despite his inherent aversion that “It is made of shit” (Amis, 1991a, p. 123).

Paul Ricoeur discusses the intrinsic relationship between time and narration in his essay “Narrative Time”:

When someone, whether storyteller or historian, starts recounting, everything is already spread out in time. In this sense, narrative activity, taken without further reflection, participates in the dissimulation both of historicity and, even more so, of the deeper levels of temporality. But at the same time, it implicitly states the truth of within timeness insofar as it possesses its own authenticity, the authenticity of its inauthenticity. (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 175)

What Ricoeur emphasizes here is that the process of narration occurs within a temporal framework. He posits that the fundamental characteristic of any narrative is

its ability to arrange events chronologically. In this sense, both reading and interpretation are inherently influenced by the element of time. Time plays a crucial role in understanding the narrative. It is intertwined with the chronological organization of the narrative and deeply embedded within the reading experience, shaping the reader's interpretation and comprehension. Hence, alterations to the temporal sequencing have a substantial impact not only on the narrative but also on its interpretation. The temporal inversion employed by Amis in the novel results in a significant manipulation of the narrative, deviating from its original trajectory.

The temporal inversion depicted in the novel results in the narrator's perception of actions and their outcomes being confusing and irrational in nature. This is consistent with Frank Kermode's conceptualization of time as an unstructured and impassioned phenomenon, leading to futile temporal experiences:

Time is an endless transition from one condition of misery to another, 'a passion without form or stations,' to be ended by no *parousia*. It is a world crying out for forms and stations, and for apocalypse; all it gets is vain temporality, mad, multiform antithetical influx. (Kermode, 2000, p. 115)

The retrograde narrative employed in this context poses a challenge in establishing definitive structures and enduring interpretations. The inversion of time bears significant consequences for the reader's capacity to comprehend the past. Similar to Kermode's notion of time as a "mad, multiform antithetical influx," Amis's inversion of time accentuates the disordered and perplexing characteristics of temporal displacement. Moreover, the narrator's misinterpretations caused by temporal reversal can be seen as reflecting the longing for a definitive form and resolution. The yearning for structure and meaning is at odds with the bizarre and reversed reality depicted in the novel. This serves to underscore the narrator's sense of disillusionment and existential confusion.

In this context, the retrograde progression of the narrative of *Time's Arrow* also has a notable impact on the reader's interpretation. At the outset of the novel, the reader is led by the narrator in a manner akin to a reading guide, through the inverted temporal progression. The reader undergoes a cognitive take of processing the events in a conventional forward temporal sequence, in order to comprehend the text that is presented in reverse chronological order. According to Karl van Wyck, the readers "read the novel twice: both indulging its temporal reorientation [...] and 'correcting'

the description in order to descry the world as we know it to be” (2015, p. 83). This enables the reader to offer a counter-interpretation to the narrator’s presumed veracity since he presents a particular version or interpretation of the occurrences. The narrator’s misinterpretation of the severity of the atrocities committed in the concentration camps, especially in Auschwitz, in which Odilo is a significant participant, represents a particularly salient illustration of this phenomenon. For instance, he firmly believes that the Jewish who are subjected to fatal medical experimentation and killed under the purview of Nazi doctors in the normal cause of time are subsequently resurrected en masse:

The air felt thick and warped with the magnetic heat of creation. Thence to the Chamber, where the bodies were stacked carefully and, in my view, counterintuitively, with babies and children at the base of the pile, then the women and the elderly, and then the men. It was my stubborn belief that it would be better the other way round, because the little ones surely risked injury under that press of naked weight. But it worked. Sometimes, my face rippling peculiarly with smiles and frowns, I would monitor proceedings through the viewing slit. (Amis, 1991a, p. 120)

Amis’s employment of the “arrow of time” metaphor elucidates the impact of temporal flow on the interpreter’s comprehension of occurrences. The Holocaust, an event that marks the culmination of history for numerous, is interpreted by the narrator as a rebirth of a particular race, as time flows in the reverse course. With the temporal alteration, the prominence of Auschwitz as a site of atrocity in history is transformed, and it instead assumes a role as a center of benevolence where new beginnings are possible. The narrator’s description of Auschwitz as a place free from all inquiries, “Here there is no why. Here there is no when, no how, no where” (p. 120) implies that Auschwitz is situated beyond the confines of customary concepts of temporal and spatial dimensions. This assertion presents a nuanced perspective on the concept of catastrophe as it poses a challenge to the reader’s comprehension of the temporal dimension that underlies catastrophic occurrences.

In the same vein, Van Wyck suggests that “the catastrophe has the potential to warp and affect our notions of time” (2000, p. 86). The portrayal of the Holocaust, in this regard, suggests an ending or a disturbance in the existence of both individuals and societies. Thus, the catastrophe becomes an active component of the text, as it not only entails deleterious outcomes but also alters the temporal and narrative perspectives. The perplexing and demeaning nature of the Holocaust as a catastrophe

is exemplified by the narrator's observation in the train station on his way to Auschwitz¹⁹, pertaining to the scarcity of time:

Every station, every journey, needs a clock. [...] But we passed again, later, and the hands hadn't moved to an earlier time. How could they move? They were painted, and would never move to an earlier time. Beneath the clock was an enormous arrow, on which was printed: Change Here For Eastern Trains. But time had no arrow, not here. (Amis, 1991a, p. 143)

At this point, it is significant to recall Ricoeur's notion that "the narrative activity" occurs through time (1980, p. 175). However, Amis posits that the enormity of the catastrophes endured by Auschwitz and Treblinka renders them devoid of time. This implies that these particular places share a comparable deficiency in terms of their capacity to be effectively narrated. The proposition posits that these sites exhibit a degree of imperviousness to historical narration due to the enormity and ghastliness of the incidents that transpired therein, which surpasses the conventional framework of storytelling. Thus, conventional notions of time are insufficient in comprehending the magnitude of devastation and suffering experienced at the camps. Time appears to lose its conventional significance.

Time's Arrow showcases an exceptional narrative framework in which the temporal sequence is inverted, leading to a retrograde progression of occurrences. The strategic use of temporal inversion functions as a literary mechanism employed by Amis to portray Odilo's distressing split psyche in a perplexing and disturbing fashion, reflecting the deterioration of his mental state. Furthermore, the temporal reversal in the novel aligns with the second law of thermodynamics, which serves to demonstrate the constant deterioration and disorder of events emphasizing the horror of the Holocaust. Amis delves into the concept of time, prompting contemplation regarding the narrativization of the Holocaust and the influence of catastrophic occurrences on the reader's temporal comprehension. Amis's manipulation of time in the novel emphasizes the profound influence time exerts on human experience, demonstrating the importance of comprehending and engaging with its complexities.

3.3. Hybrid Postmodernism

As a prime example of Martin Amis's experimentation with narrative form, *Time's Arrow*, which intertwines reversed chronology with the historical backdrop of the Holocaust, displays a hybrid approach not only in postmodernism but also in

¹⁹ In the novel's retrograde realm Odilo is on his way "back from Auschwitz" at this stage.

many stances of literary discourse. According to Finney, the novel “confronts a question that has consumed Amis from an early stage in his career: is modernity leading civilization to self-destruction?” (2006, p. 101). In this sense, it would be meaningful to focus on the subject of modernity and Enlightenment prior to delving into the analysis of the novel within the framework of postmodernism.

The Enlightenment, distinguished by cognitive and societal progressions, introduced a positive perspective of modernity, accentuating rationality, science, and personal autonomy. Nevertheless, over time, scholars have expressed skepticism and scrutinized the fundamental presumptions of this perspective (Bristow, 2017, para. 41-42). The extensive and diverse range of violent occurrences that transpired throughout WWII prompted a reassessment of the principles and concepts associated with modernity, as evidenced by their correlation with the atrocities. Particularly the Holocaust serves as a poignant reminder of the deadly potential of unrestrained doctrines and the darker aspects of Enlightenment. In their seminal work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), Adorno and Horkheimer argue that Western authorities with prospective fascist tendencies, who have derived their power from Enlightenment principles “call to exterminate [Jews] like vermin” (p. 137). As indicated in the “Introduction” section, Amis’s perspective on modernity has been shaped by the ideas of Adorno and Horkheimer. Thus, the works of Amis depict the adverse effects of the Enlightenment on humanity, as can be observed.

As a member of the post-war generation, Amis perceives a sense of duty within his literary endeavors, wherein he seeks to direct attention not solely towards nuclear weaponry, which he regards as a by-product of Enlightenment ideals and the modernity. Additionally, he feels compelled to explore the Holocaust that he regards as “central event of the twentieth century” (Bellante, 1992, p. 16), and even the Russian gulags. In this sense, examining *Time’s Arrow*’s position regarding the Enlightenment is imperative in figuring out Amis’s comprehensive viewpoint on modernity. As stated previously, the Enlightenment, regarded as a philosophical outlook, prioritizes rationality, advancement, and the quest for knowledge. The ideology advocates for fundamental values such as the protection of personal liberties, the prioritization of human interests, and the repudiation of irrational beliefs and unexamined convictions. However, *Time’s Arrow* depicts the Holocaust as a result of straying from these principles. The proposition put forth in the novel

suggests that the Holocaust is facilitated by a mindset that emerged due to the Nazis' subversion of the principles of these ideals. In this specific context, the novel aligns with the notion that the Holocaust is a production of the perversion and corruption of the Enlightenment ideology.

Through his analytical perspective, Lyotard's viewpoint allows for the examination of the "metanarratives" (1984, p. xxiv) of modernity, which he attributes to the catastrophes of the era. He posits that the intolerance prevalent in society can be attributed to the preeminent universal ideals of modernity. In *The Differend* (1980), Lyotard argues that the notion that all truths are coherent can be invalidated by the mere fact of a reality of the Holocaust:

The "philosophies of history" that inspired the nineteenth and twentieth centuries claim to assure passages over the abyss of heterogeneity or of the event. The names which are those of "our history" oppose counterexamples to their claim. -Everything real rational, everything rational is real: "Auschwitz" refutes speculative doctrine. This crime at least, which is real, is not rational. (Lyotard, 1980, p. 179)

However, Zygmunt Bauman claims an alternative perspective, contending that the Holocaust effectively utilized rationality to execute its abhorrent deeds:

The Holocaust was not an antithesis of modern civilization and everything [...] it stands for. [...] the Holocaust could merely have uncovered another face of the same modern society whose other, more familiar, face we so admire. And that the two faces are perfectly comfortably attached to the same body. What we perhaps fear most, is that each of the two faces can no more exist without the other than can the two sides of a coin. (Bauman, 2008; original ed. 1989, p. 7)

In the case of *Time's Arrow*, Amis employs intricate narrative techniques to explore this dichotomy of modernity, encompassing both civility and barbarism. The occurrence of the Holocaust, an irrational act of inhumanity, is paradoxical in light of the fact that it was carried out under the guise of enlightenment and utilizing the instruments of modernity. This is particularly noteworthy given that rationality is widely considered to be the most fundamental element of enlightenment. As per Finney's assertion, such a historical paradox can solely be brought to fruition in literature through "the use of paradoxical narrative techniques on the part of any novelist attempting to evoke it" (2006, p. 102). Yet, despite being influenced by Adorno and Horkheimer's ideas on enlightenment and acknowledging the destructive impact of modernity in wider ethical framework, the central focus of Amis in *Time's*

Arrow is more specific, he delves into the ethical ramifications of a Nazi doctor's behaviour and the nature of evil.

According to Dermot McCarthy, narrative structure of *Time's Arrow* "works back from Amis's own historical moment to the Holocaust of WWII as the moral origin of his generation's postmodern condition" (1999, p. 296). McCarthy employs a neologism to describe the reversed narrative in the novel, which he refers to as "chronillogical" (p. 296). The narrative trajectory of this chronillogical style differs from that of realist fiction in that it progresses from present to past. As a result, the realist notion of an unpredictable future is supplanted by a form of amnesia or failing to recollect the past, a prevalent characteristic of postmodern literature. As a matter of fact, apart from its depiction of strive to recall the past and make sense of it as a postmodern treat, the novel embodies several common postmodern characteristics including metafiction, intertextuality, and irony.

The utilization of a reversed timeline in *Time's Arrow* poses a challenge to conventional storytelling techniques and introduces a disruption to the forward advancement of events. In the novel, the narrative flows backwards in contrast to traditional literary narratives. However, unlike typical postmodern novels, time remains linear and is not fragmented. Amis employs this reversed "narrative conceit" (Diedrick, 1995, p. 164) to expose the futility of attaining a definitive interpretation in the Derridean sense, rather than manipulating the narrative's reality, which is one of the objectives of the postmodern novel. Derrida employs the term "différance" to denote the intrinsic disparities and postponement of significance that are present in language, as well as the interplay between presence and absence (2004, p. 283). In the same sense, the novel depicts a phenomenon wherein the reversal of time causes a delayed understanding or recognition of the relation between present and past, leading to a state akin to memory loss. One notable representation of such an occurrence is the "arrow of time" at Treblinka, which remains stationary due to its status as a mere drawing "the hands hadn't moved to an earlier time. How could they move? They were painted and would never move to an earlier time." (Amis, 1991a, p. 143). The depiction of the painted arrow on the clock implies that the human perception of time is characterized by a perpetual sense of the present moment without a definite endpoint. This is consistent with the notion of différance as it suggests that the current moment is in a perpetual state of flux and difficult to grasp.

The complete and comprehensive experience of time remains elusive and unattainable, as it is a continuously postponed and unfinished phenomenon. The condition of delayed knowledge of a given moment can result in a cognitive effect that is similar to memory loss. The deferral of sense and the process of making past experiences unfamiliar can be interpreted as an additional representation of the concept of *différance*. The representation of the past is approached from a perspective that assumes the novel encounter, thereby disrupting conventional understanding and expectations.

Time's Arrow integrates a self-reflexive approach by manipulating narrative norms. Despite the narrator's use of the first-person pronoun "I" to address the character of Tod/Odilo, his adoption of a third-person perspective in conveying the story imbues the novel with a metafictional quality. For Brian Crews, the self-reflexive characteristic of postmodern fiction is achieved through the bending of narrative conventions, he suggests "There has always been an implicit separation between the narrating self and the experiencing self" (1999, p. 31). In this sense, in postmodern fiction a differentiation exists between the "narrating self" and the "experiencing self" in the context of a narrative. In a first-person narrative, despite being told from the protagonist's perspective ("I"), the narrating self is perceived as a construct within the narrative, effectively assuming a third-person role. In other words, the "I" ceases to represent the personal and subjective experience of the narrator but rather becomes a constructed identity other than himself:

For a while it worked (there was redemption); and while it worked he and I were one, [...] He put *us* back together. But of course you shouldn't be doing any of this kind of thing with human beings. . . The party is over. He lies there in the peeling pyramid of the attic bedroom, on his cot shaped like a gutter. [...] I'll always be here. But he's on his own. (Amis, 1991a, p. 147)

As typical of postmodernism, the narrative demonstrates a self-awareness regarding the constructed of narrative and the difficulties of accurately portraying an authentic and cohesive sense of identity. The novel is delving into the concept of fragmented identity and the detachment of the narrative voice from the genuineness of individual experience. However, it is important to note that while the fragmented identity presents a challenge for the narrative voice to provide an authentic account as a typical trait of postmodernism, the narrator's voice remains unified and singular

throughout the novel, resembling that of a realist fiction. This sustained viewpoint of the narrator yields a coherent and concentrated narrative encounter.

Despite the retrograde motion of the world, the narrator experiences a linear forward motion of time. The temporal progression of Tod's life results in his future becoming his past, while the narrator's recollections remain intact and unaltered, he says, "he forgets, I remember" (Amis, 1991a, p. 155). In this sense, it might be suggested that it is some kind of inverted Bildungsroman. The evolution of the protagonist's stance and emotions is evident throughout the narrative, yet the reader is not presented with any sense of ambiguity. In accordance with McHale's postmodern work definition, Amis creates a "constructed (un)reality" (2004, p. 36) by inverting the time; however, the novel also addresses significant ethical and moral inquiries through a modernist perspective. Furthermore, the reversal of time in the novel engenders a fragmented space that facilitates the "search for meaning" which is a characteristic of modernism that accentuates existential preoccupations (Gillies, 2007, p. 181).

Finney categorizes both *London Fields* and *Time's Arrow* as postmodern. He draws upon the concept of postmodern sublime theorized by Lyotard. Lyotard argues that the concept of the sublime in the postmodern era entails a fusion of both pleasurable and painful experiences. The notion posits that reason ought to supersede all modes of representation, whereas imagination or sensibility proves inadequate in fully apprehending the concept. Within the realm of art, this phenomenon results in an ongoing predicament of representation, as postmodernism exhibits the "unpresentable" through its very presentation:

modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unpresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure. (Lyotard, 1984, p. 81)

According to Finney, the two novels provide critical evaluations of representation and contest Lyotard's argument of "'the lack of reality' of reality" (1984, p. 77). In particular, *Time's Arrow* offers a critical analysis of traditional representation through the use of a narrative structure that is reversed chronologically. The temporal inversion elicits a sense of elation, as it subverts established storytelling norms and pushes the boundaries of depiction. Thus, this aesthetic of the sublime is used by

Amis to depict the “unpresentable” at Auschwitz. By creating its “negative presentation”²⁰ (Lyotard, 1984, p. 78) at the same time as its positive, Amis invokes the unpresentable, an endeavour that leads to restoration of the occurrences.

The novel utilizes the postmodern technique of intertextuality, situating it within wider historical and cultural frameworks. Amis makes reference to all texts that have exerted a direct or indirect influence on the composition of the novel in the “Afterword”. Amis cites several notable sources and individuals in his note, including Robert Jay Lifton’s *Nazi Doctors*, which he acknowledges as an indispensable influence on his novel, he says “My novel would not and could not have been written without it” (1991a, p. 167). Additionally, he expresses a deep admiration for Primo Levi and his memoirs, which have had a significant impact on both his artistic and personal sensibilities. Finally, as it is mentioned in the introductory part of this chapter, Amis references a well-known passage from *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut that has given him the idea of time reversal. Through the intertextual references to Lifton’s comprehensive analysis of Nazi doctors, Primo Levi’s firsthand accounts on the brutality of the Holocaust, and a passage from Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* that depicts a non-fictional moment as inspiration, In this sense, Amis employs intertextuality as a literary technique, not to generate ambiguity, as is the case with other postmodern works, but to underscore the veracity of the Holocaust’s savagery as an event in history. By incorporating these non-fictional elements, Amis seeks to authenticate and underscore the gravity of the Holocaust, showcasing his intention to provide a truthful and accurate representation of historical events within his fictional narrative.

Time’s Arrow displays significant postmodern characteristics in its narrative structure, such as metafiction, intertextuality, and irony. Nonetheless, it deviates from traditional postmodern features by virtue of its unified perspective, ethical concerns, realistic elements, and conspicuous authorial agency. These departures indicate that while the novel adopts and actively employs postmodern techniques, it surpasses the confines of strict adherence to postmodernism by integrating supplementary narrative and thematic components. The approach adopted by Amis demonstrates a deliberate

²⁰ A notion or artistic process which Lyotard theorizes on the basis of Kantian sublime. Lyotard describes it as “an empty “abstraction” which the imagination experiences when in search for a presentation of the infinite (another unpresentable): this abstraction itself is like a presentation of the infinite” (1984, p. 78).

effort to reconcile postmodern aesthetics with a wider literary framework, thereby highlighting a sophisticated intermingling of various styles and literary conventions. As a result, the work defies easy classification within the confines of postmodernism.

Amis in *Time's Arrow* delves into the Holocaust and its aftermath, avoiding the inclination to present a facile resolution or an overarching storyline to replace the atrocities of that era. Amis employs a deconstructive approach to analyse and critique metanarratives, emphasizing the significance of addressing the contemporary state marked by irrationality. The novel employs irony and linguistic manipulation to mount a critical attack on individuals who rely on outdated expressions and rationalist accounts, revealing their insufficiency in accurately conveying the full extent of the Holocaust and the consequential disruption that echoed throughout Western history. Amis aims to present a thought-provoking perspective that does not offer simplistic solutions or conveniently packaged justifications, but rather encourages critical engagement with the intricate complexities of contemporary society. Through the subversion of tropes and the exposure of the limitations of skeptic accounts. In this context, the novel prompts readers to confront the unsettling realities and unpredictability that are inherent in comprehending and depicting historical traumas.

CONCLUSION

Martin Amis's literary approach exhibits similarities to postmodern principles, as it incorporates a variety of forms and genres to create a narrative that reflects a world that is disconnected from its fundamental reality. He exhibits a tendency to alternate between the genres of tragedy and comedy, effectively encapsulating the intricate and paradoxical nature of human existence through a stance that resides on the threshold between the two. Amis's examination of characters and their interpersonal dynamics demonstrates his exceptional aptitude for depicting the complexities of human behaviour amidst a shifting literary milieu. His body of work explores the intersections between realism and postmodernism, offering an authentic portrayal of a world influenced by both tragic and comedic elements. Moreover, his artistry allows for various interpretations concerning the profound philosophical implications it entails.

London Fields and *Time's Arrow* stand out among Amis's body of work due to their intricate plots and their unique ability to blend established and popular literary conventions in a satirical manner. These novels serve as prime examples of Amis's exceptional storytelling and are widely regarded as his most remarkable works of fiction. Throughout this thesis, the focus lies on analysing Amis's narrative techniques employed in these two novels, with particular emphasis on his manipulation of time. By exploring the interplay between narrative structure and temporal elements, this study aims to shed light on Amis's distinctive approach to storytelling within the framework of his idiosyncratic hybrid postmodernism. Overall, these novels exemplify Amis's narrative expertise and serve as significant contributions to the field of postmodern literature. After conducting a thorough analysis of these works, this thesis has attempted to uncover significant insights into Amis's narrative strategies. Moreover, the study highlights the broader themes and concerns that permeate his writing, providing a deeper understanding of his literary contributions.

In Chapter I, an in-depth analysis is conducted to explore both narrative and temporal techniques utilized in *London Fields*, with a particular emphasis on the examination of metafictional elements. The chapter aims to unravel the intricate layers of storytelling within the novel, highlighting the ways in which Amis employs self-referential and self-conscious techniques to blur the boundaries between fiction and reality. The novel grapples with the issue of authenticity and authorship, which serves as a persistent concern throughout the novel. Through intricate narrative techniques, Amis creates a dynamic interaction among various narrative authorities, blurring the lines between author, narrator, and characters. The novel presents a complex exploration of authorship, as the characters within the story struggle to construct their own narratives and assert their individual voices.

The process of drawing a definitive conclusion regarding the narrative authority within the novel appears to be complicated by the presence of conflicting cues that contribute to its characterization. Within the realm of fundamental artistic principles, there exist numerous gaps and discontinuities in the text that necessitate the process of filling and reconstructing in order to derive significance. *London Fields* exhibits a noticeable contrast between the concepts of freedom and control, wherein readers are prompted to actively participate in interpreting the narrative while also experiencing limitations imposed by the Amis's deliberate guidance. The three author protagonists of the novel exhibit a lack of clear narrative control. The presence of obscurity in this context serves to both undermine and reinforce the concept of a conclusive narrative authority. The issue of authorship and authority is characterized by the absence of clarity, which ultimately shifts focus towards the one author who is responsible for the novel's creation, namely Amis himself. The differentiation between form and content in the analysis of the novel might be likened to the dichotomy between fiction and reality. Broadly speaking, the former pertains to the ontological manner in which the narrative is fashioned, encompassing the utilization of metafictional elements and self-referentiality. The latter refers to the thematic and conceptual aspects that emerge from the novel and are subject to scholarly analysis. However, in the case of *London Fields*, Amis intentionally subverts this dichotomy by obscuring the boundaries between the two. He challenges the concept of a unified storyline by incorporating his own presence within the narrative. In the novel, Amis effectively addresses the issue of narrative authority by

re-establishing a clear ontological boundary between himself as the author and his written work, thereby asserting his control over the narrative. Therefore, the differentiation between reality and fiction is thus reaffirmed.

Two additional topics that are examined in Chapter I include the concept of an unreliable narrator and the sense of anticipation that arises from the theme of an impending apocalypse. The utilization of an unreliable narrator in the novel serves to intensify the prevailing atmosphere of apocalypse and ambiguity that permeates the narrative. By employing this narrative technique, Amis amplifies the sense of uncertainty and instability in the story, reflecting the tenuous existence of human beings in a chaotic and unpredictable society. The presence of the unreliable narrator synergistically works with the apocalyptic metaphor, further emphasizing the fragility of human life and the imminent dangers that surround it. Within the novel, the overarching philosophical concepts of fate, personal agency, and the interconnectedness of events are brought to the forefront. This is particularly accentuated by the fortuitous convergence of catastrophic occurrences and the characters' demise. Through this deliberate juxtaposition of seemingly disparate elements within a singular setting, Amis prompts readers to contemplate the broader implications of these themes and encourages reflection on the significance and purpose of human existence in the face of its inherent unpredictability and transient nature.

The adoption of a narrative technique that involves revealing a portion of the conclusion at the outset of the story serves the purpose of generating a feeling of suspense and expectation. By presenting these particulars at the outset, the reader becomes engaged in the narrative, intrigued by the manner in which the events will transpire, and eager to ascertain the underlying motivations and circumstances surrounding the act of homicide. The characters' anticipations regarding the culmination of the world serve as a standard against which the actual occurrence of such an event is measured. The temporal progression plays a pivotal role in this intricate portrayal of the apocalypse. A distinct demarcation exists between the period preceding the Crisis and the commencement of the ensuing events, leaving limited temporal resources for adequate preparation. In light of the prevailing Crisis, temporal acceleration has become markedly pronounced, resulting in the erosion of numerous intangible virtues, including love, morality, and innocence. The imminence

of the end and the anticipation of its arrival exert a significant influence on all aspects of existence. The notion of the conclusion is regulated by the passage of time; however, it manifests itself through the characters' association with significance. To clarify, the characters' anticipation of the conclusion encompasses not only a recognition of the diminishing time, but also a deliberate endeavour to attribute meaning to the imminent culmination. The pursuit of significance motivates characters to engage in the process of visualizing and embodying the ultimate outcome, as they strive to provide it with form and substance. In essence, the implementation of an unreliable narrator and the employment of the apocalyptic metaphor in the novel work in tandem to create a narrative that explores not only the immediate events and circumstances but also invites contemplation of deeper philosophical and existential inquiries. The deliberate placement of these narrative elements prompts a contemplation of the human condition, raising questions about agency in shaping destinies and the interconnectedness of experiences in an ever-changing world.

Using the theoretical framework of Amis's hybrid postmodernist approaches, Chapter II focuses on undertaking a thorough examination of the narrative strategies and temporal experiments offered in *Time's Arrow*. The narrative structure of the novel, similar to that of *London Fields*, demonstrates notable postmodern attributes, such as metafiction, intertextuality, and irony. Nevertheless, it deviates from conventional postmodern characteristics in various significant manners, including its cohesive viewpoint, ethical considerations, realistic components, and identifiable authorial control. These shifts suggest that although the novel embraces and actively utilizes postmodern techniques, it surpasses rigid adherence to postmodernism by integrating supplementary narrative and thematic elements. Amis's approach exemplifies a conscious effort to harmonize postmodern aesthetics within a more expansive literary framework, yielding a refined amalgamation of diverse styles and literary conventions. As a result, the piece of work presents a challenge in terms of its categorization within the boundaries of postmodernism.

The examination of Amis's temporal experiments within the novel highlights his exceptional ability to craft a narrative that progresses in reverse chronological sequence. Scholars and critics, including Richard Menke, have extensively examined the proposition that Amis derives inspiration from the second law of

thermodynamics. This particular viewpoint presents a novel approach to analysing the narrative progression of the novel, enabling a more profound understanding of the complex relationship between the structure and substance in Amis's exploration of temporal dynamics, recollection, and ethical obligations.

The metaphor of the "arrow of time" from which the novel derives its title, serves as a prominent manifestation of Amis's manipulation of temporal concepts. Amis's use of this metaphor illuminates the profound impact that temporal flow has on the interpreter's understanding of events. Within the narrative, the Holocaust, a cataclysmic event that represents a culmination of history for many, is perceived by the narrator as a rebirth of a particular race, as time flows in reverse. This temporal reversal transforms the significance of Auschwitz, a site of immense atrocity, into a centre of potential benevolence and new beginnings. The portrayal of the Holocaust, in this context, suggests an ending or disruption in history. Consequently, the catastrophe becomes an active and integral component of the text, not only resulting in devastating consequences but also altering the temporal and narrative perspectives employed. Through the masterful use of temporal manipulation and narrative perspective, Amis skilfully weaves together the complex interplay between time, catastrophe, and individual experience. By subverting conventional chronology and exploring the transformative power of temporal inversion, the novel prompts readers to confront the disorienting nature of historical atrocities and the far-reaching consequences they have on both the individual and collective consciousness.

An examination of both novels *London Fields* and *Time's Arrow* illuminates the intricate dynamics of the narrator's role, as both works adeptly employ metafictional dimensions that blur the boundaries between observer and narrator-witness, engendering a nuanced exploration of the interplay between fiction and reality. In *Time's Arrow*, the narrator, referred to as "I" provides insights into the novel's temporal-narrative structure while withholding the identity of the protagonist. However, even the narrator finds himself confused by the sequence of events in the story. On the other hand, in *London Fields*, Samson presents himself as the apparent writer and author, meticulously recording every event with the intention of transforming them into a novel. However, despite his claims of authorship, Samson lacks the author's ultimate control over the story. Instead, he becomes a mere observer of the drama orchestrated by Nicola. Samson's role becomes that of a

chronicler, capturing the unfolding events of Nicola's life as they align with her premonitions. In this sense, both the narrator and Samson serve to underscore the intricate nature of authorship and narrative control within the novels. The narrator in *Time's Arrow* grapples with comprehending the temporal structure of the story, while Samson, despite proclaiming himself as the author, acknowledges Nicola's superior influence over the narrative trajectory. These comparisons highlight the blurred boundaries between the author, the observer, and the characters, effectively emphasizing the postmodern themes of narrative ambiguity and the subversion of conventional storytelling norms. Consequently, it can be argued that both narrators convey unreliable narratives. Samson's narrative unreliability in *London Fields* arises from his limited authorial control over the story he recounts. Similarly, the unreliability of the narrator in *Time's Arrow* might be attributed to his role as an observer who lacks control over both Odilo's body and the course of events, merely serving as a witness to Odilo's story.

Building upon the examination of the novels' treatment of time and narrative structures, the comparison between *London Fields* and *Time's Arrow* further reveals the interconnected yet distinct perspectives Amis presents in his exploration of temporality and experimental narrative techniques. In *London Fields*, Amis offers a critique of the contemporary world's fragmented experience of time, challenging the obsession with technology and development. The narrative structure of the novel aligns with Amis's apocalyptic imagination, portraying a chaotic and crisis-ridden reality. By humorously highlighting the impact of social, psychological, and cultural factors on our perception of time, Amis prompts readers to question the constructed nature of our temporal understanding. On the other hand, *Time's Arrow* engages in historiographic metafiction, blending historical events with fictional elements in its reversed narrative. This deliberate manipulation of time challenges traditional notions and invites readers to contemplate the intricate relationship between history, fiction, and human constructs. Amis's use of inverted narrative serves as a guide for readers, facilitating their comprehension of the fictional world while encouraging critical reflection on the boundaries between fiction and reality. Thus, while *London Fields* critiques the fragmented and distorted experience of time in the contemporary world, *Time's Arrow* pushes the boundaries of conventional storytelling by presenting a narrative that unfolds in reverse. Both novels showcase Amis's thematic

exploration of time, yet they do so from distinct angles. Together, they offer a multifaceted examination of temporality, inviting readers to contemplate the complexities of time and its profound influence on human experience.

The novels *London Fields* and *Time's Arrow*, despite deploying distinct narrative techniques, offer complementary examinations of time, destiny, and the human condition within the wider context of Amis's literary works. Both novels exemplify Amis's proficient narrative abilities and his enduring preoccupation with existential motifs. The intentional incorporation of the term "time's arrow" in both literary works underscores Amis's deep reflection on the inexorable progression of time and the significant forces that mold the human experience. Moreover, the conspicuous resemblance in the titles of both works alludes to a thematic resonance and an interconnectedness that surpasses their divergent narratives. Amis, through his intellectually stimulating narratives, encourages readers to engage in profound inquiries regarding the essence of time and the intricacies inherent in the human condition.

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