

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY OF LAGHOuat
FACULTY OF LETTERS AND LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



Metafiction and Absurdity in Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989)

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of "Magister" in British, Commonwealth and American Studies

Submitted by:

Aicha HOCINE

Board of Examiners:

Mohamed AFKIR	Professor	University of Laghouat	Chairman
Nassima KAID	MCA	University of Laghouat	Supervisor
Nouredine GUERROUDJ	Professor	U. Sidi Bel Abbes	Examiner
Mohammed Seghir HALIMI	MCA	University of Ouargla	Examiner

Academic Year: 2016-2017

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Dedication

To **my parents** who taught me the value of hard work,

To my sisters and brothers,

Zineb, Amina, Mohammed, Imane and Abdeldjalil,

To my friends,

Sarra Bederina, Nakhla Bederina, Meriem Hamini,

Faiza Boucheria and Assia Meskoul

Without whom none of my success would be possible,

To **all ambitious researchers** and **bookworms,**

I dedicate this dissertation.

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First and above all, I praise **Allah**, the Almighty for His help and bless. I am totally sure that this work would have never become reality without His guidance.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to **our university** for giving us the opportunity to complete this work. This dissertation appears in its current form owing to the guidance of several people. I would therefore like to offer my sincere thanks to all of them.

Special thanks to my supervisor, **Dr. Nassima KAID**, *for the valuable guidance, advice, insightful remarks and all the efforts she has done throughout my studies. Thank you, Doctor.*

I am most grateful to my teacher, **Prof. Fatiha KAID BERRAHAL**, for her support, efforts and great patience at all times, not to mention her advice and unsurpassed knowledge in the field of literature.

My sincere thanks go to **Prof. Abbes BAHOUS**, **Prof. Nouredine GUERROUDJ** and **Dr. Mohammed Seghir HALIMI**, who provided us with lectures that subtly contributed to enrich this dissertation. Without their precious support, it would not be possible to conduct this research.

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Abstract

Western man's inability to find meaning and the problematic issue of how individuals perceive reality have contributed to the rise of the postmodernist novel. This is due to the loss of values and the supreme authority of God while questioning God-novelist relationship. Accordingly, the postmodernist novel undermines the supreme authority of the author in favour of the reader's decision to construct or deconstruct the text. In this light, the main aim of this dissertation was to explore the underlying features which result from introducing a sense of absurdity with metafictional devices in Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989). To achieve this aim, the researcher adopted the descriptive and analytical approaches. This dissertation, then, considered what the absurdist themes have to offer to the postmodernist literature. I argued that the novel asserts the idea that chaos in literature is no longer distinct from the instability of individual's life which point out the correlation between man's seeking for purpose and man's desire to find meaning in literary representation of the world. The dissertation was structured in three chapters. Eventually, it examined the need for employing the exhausted forms in postmodernist literature and illustrated the absurdist themes' significance to highlight the playfulness of *London Fields*. It, also, pointed out the correlation between man's search for purpose and his desire to find meaning in fiction and questioned the signifying interplay of self-reflexive elements in Amis's novel. Most importantly, the study led to the conclusion that absurdity is a metafictional device in *London Fields* and Martin Amis could plainly explore the themes that create a sense of absurdity in his metafictional paradox. On the grounds of this conclusion, a number of recommendations were put forward to shed more light on the link between absurdity and the postmodernist features.

Résumé

L'incapacité de l'homme occidental de trouver un sens de la vie et la question problématique de la perception de la réalité par les individus ont contribué à l'apparition du roman postmoderne. Cela est dû à la perte de valeurs et à l'autorité suprême de Dieu dans un monde absurde tout en interrogeant les relations entre Dieu et les novellistes. En conséquence, le roman postmoderniste porte atteinte à l'autorité suprême de l'auteur en faveur de la décision du lecteur de construire ou de déconstruire le texte. Dans cette optique, l'objectif principal de cette dissertation était d'explorer les caractéristiques sous-jacentes résultant de l'introduction d'un sentiment d'absurdité avec des dispositifs métafictionnels dans *London Fields* (1989) de Martin Amis. Pour atteindre cet objectif, la chercheuse a adopté les approches descriptives et analytiques. La chercheuse a vu que le roman représente, en profondeur, le chaos de la littérature, qui n'est plus distinct de l'instabilité de la vie de l'individu, ce qui indique l'interdépendance entre la recherche d'un but humain dans sa vie et son désir de trouver un sens en écrivant des œuvres littéraires. Cette recherche a été divisée en trois chapitres. En fait, elle examine la nécessité d'utiliser les formes épuisées dans la littérature postmoderniste et illustre l'importance des thèmes abordés l'absurde pour souligner la jouissance de *London Fields*. Elle souligne également la corrélation entre la recherche du sens de la vie perdu par l'homme et son désir de trouver un sens dans la fiction et interroge l'interaction significative des éléments auto-réfléchis dans le roman d'Amis. Plus important encore, l'étude a conduit à la conclusion que l'absurdité est un dispositif métafictionnel dans *London Fields* et Martin Amis pourrait explorer clairement les thèmes qui créent un sentiment d'absurdité dans l'effet paradoxal de la métafiction. Sur la base de cette conclusion, un certain nombre de recommandations ont été présentées afin de jeter plus de lumière sur le lien entre l'absurdité et les caractéristiques postmodernistes.

ملخص

إن عدم قدرة الإنسان الغربي على إيجاد معنى للحياة وكذلك إشكالية نسبية رؤى الأفراد للواقع قد أسهم في ظهور رواية ما بعد الحداثة. ويرجع ذلك إلى تمرد المجتمع الغربي على المعايير والأخلاق الاجتماعية التي كانت تحكمه ورفضه لبعض المفاهيم التي كانت سائدة خاصة السيادة المطلقة للإله، بمفهومه الغربي، وبالتالي إعادة النظر في كل من مفهوم القوة الإلهية في الواقع الموضوعي ومفهوم هيمنة الكاتب على النص الأدبي في فترة ما بعد الحداثة بحيث يقوم ما يسمى بالميتاقص بكسر هذه الهيمنة وكشف العملية البنائية والتركيبية للعمل الأدبي. وفقا لذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى محاولة تسليط الضوء على دلالة الأدب العبثي في الرواية الميتاقصية (1989) *London Fields* للكاتب البريطاني مارتن أيمس. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، اعتمدت الباحثة المنهج الوصفي والتحليلي. تكمن أهمية هذه الدراسة في محاولتها دراسة المدرسة العبثية وتجسيدها لمعاناة الإنسان الغربي في هذه الرواية الميتاقصية ببحثه عن وسائل التعبير الأدبية التي تتوافق مع محاولته لفهمه وانسجامة مع ما يحدث. رأت الباحثة بأن الرواية تمثل -في عمقها- الفوضى في الأدب الذي لم يعد متميزا عن عدم استقرار حياة الفرد مما يشير إلى الترابط بين بحث الإنسان لهدف في حياته ورغبته في إيجاد المعنى عن طريق كتابة الأعمال الأدبية. وقد قسم هذا البحث إلى ثلاثة فصول. تناول دراسة أدب الاستنزاف وأهميته في رواية ما بعد الحداثة وكيفية استخدام الكاتب مارتن أيمس لكل من السخرية والتناقض. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تطرق إلى توضيح العلاقة بين ميل الإنسان الغربي لإيجاد هدف في الحياة و رغبته في الوصول إليه من خلال الكتابة الأدبية، كما ناقشت وجهة نظر الراوي للسرد بما تعرف بالانعكاسية الذاتية ودلالاتها في أدب العبث والميتاقص. أدت الدراسة إلى استنتاج مفاده أن العبث هو أهم الأدوات الأدبية للرواية الميتاقصية و أن الكاتب مارتن أيمس استطاع بوضوح طرح الموضوعات التي تخلق شعورا من اللامعقول والعبث في دراسته لدور الأدب و دور الكاتب في مجتمع تسوده الفوضى وعدم الاستقرار. وبناء على هذا الاستنتاج، طرح عدد من التوصيات لإلقاء مزيد من الضوء على الصلة بين العبث وسمات ما بعد الحداثة.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Résumé.....	iv
ملخص.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
General Introduction	1
Chapter One: Absurdity in the Metafictional Novel.....	8
Introduction	9
I-1 –Literature from Silence to Exhaustion.	10
I-2- Understanding Metafiction and Absurdity in Literature.....	19
2-1- Plotting Against Fiction : The Metafictional Aspects.....	19
2-2- Framing the Labyrinth of Absurdity : A Postmodernist Reading.....	25
I-3-The Metafictional Absurd in Some Novels.....	34
Conclusion.....	44
Chapter Two: The Metafictional Absurd: Parody, Irony and Playfulness.....	45
Introduction.....	46
II-1-The Postmodernist Parody: Making the Difference.....	47
1-1-A Postmodernist title and the Setting of <i>London Fields</i>	47
1-2- The Multiplicity of Genres and Double-Relation Characters.....	51
1-3- Mingling Dystopia, Apocalypse and History.....	57

1-4- The Apocalyptic Features of <i>London Fields</i>	59
1-5-Edging Apocalypse of Time in <i>London Fields</i>	66
1-6- The Dystopian Aspects in <i>London Fields</i>	69
1-7- <i>London Fields</i> and the Death of the Author.....	76
II-2- In a Quest for Despair, Discontent and Meaninglessness in <i>London Fields</i>	80
2-1-The Significance of the Death of God.....	80
2-2- Absurdity in <i>London Fields</i> : Apocalypse, Dystopia and Comic Situations.....	84
Conclusion	87
Chapter Three: On Reality and Illusion: Self-Reflexive Writing	88
Introduction	89
III- 1- Self-Consciousness and Self-Reflexivity in <i>London Fields</i> ' Note	90
III-2-The Table of Contents in <i>London Fields</i>	92
III-3-Confrontation between Sam's Diary and Asprey's Novel.....	94
III-4-Scrutinising Authority in <i>London Fields</i>	96
4-1- The Writer.....	96
4- 2- The Self- Conscious reader of the Novel.....	101
III-5-Information- Gathering, Imitation and Media: The Reliable Narrator.....	108
III-6-Writing Difficulties in <i>London Fields</i>	115
III-7-Absurdity in <i>London Fields</i> : Towards Formulating Reality.....	120
Conclusion	124
General Conclusion	125
Appendices	130
Martin Amis's Biography.....	131

Synopsis of <i>London Fields</i>	132
An Interview with Martin Amis about <i>London Fields</i>	133
Glossary	135
Bibliography	138
Webography	140

General Introduction

Man's presence on Earth has led him to raise substantial questions about the nature as well as the purpose of human existence. In Western man's view, these questions, however, are still intricate and exposed to debate. This is due to the fact that individuals are struggling with issues such as the confrontation between God, man and the world. Indeed, it is based up on the divergence and variation in which people may perceive this encounter; the farther individuals look into this universe, the more they lie deeper and get involved in the very self.

In fact, the aftermath of World War II broke down people's trust and belief in traditional values. This resulted in breaking new literary ground. Many critics, such as Ihab Hassan (1925-2015), John Barth (1930) and Linda Hutcheon (1947), started to examine and highlight some of the features of postmodernism which draw attention and introduce reappraisal of traditional pretensions and conventions about language, culture and history. Besides, they offer a reconsideration of the notions of God, man and the world. In this light, critics assert that postmodernists reject unity and celebrate the multiplicity of truths. This is due to the fact that they believe to be living in a godless universe characterised by the absence of supreme authorities, values and absolute rules that prevail this universe.

Beneath the postmodernist frame, Western man is left with multiple realities; he has realised the fact that he cannot perceive truth entirely. Individuals, then, can no longer claim certainty or objectivity to their perspectives or viewpoints, and truth has become multifaceted and personal. Postmodernists, then, tend to depict the world in terms of instability, chaos and inconsistency. This fragmentation and incoherence resulted in a sense of absurdity and nonsense. Absurdist literature, however, is a spicky business after all. It, willingly, examines a world which is both complicated and, at times, simple but nevertheless worthy: it is meaningless and purposeless.

Consequently, the postmodernist narrative questions the state of literature in this fragmented universe. It examines the link between meaning in life and meaning in literature. It also questions the potentials of literature to make sense in a world without meaning. There are nonetheless some novels that provide pretty close parallels to postmodernist literature. One of those literary works that, self-consciously, play with the notions of narrative and narratorial roles as well as the retrospective parodies which can go with that, is Martin Amis's *London Fields* (1989), a murder, love story about unsuccessful writer who imitates from life.

In this instance, the aim of this dissertation is to examine the significance of introducing the absurdity of life in Amis's metafictional novel. It also attempts to question the possibility to establish a stable individual in a universal destabilisation or historical context. Besides, this research tries to highlight the struggle between narratorial control and narrative chaos by illustrating instability, the lack of control, chaos and authority in Amis's novel which, self-consciously and systematically, draws attention to its fictionality and poses questions about reality and fiction. Moreover, it endeavours to explore the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, and substantially, between art and life. It also manifests the characters' attitudes to the purposelessness of their lives.

What is worth mentioning is that Amis's postmodernist novel could offer the most rewarding material with which I may develop my interest. Unlike the modernists who stood against chaos, postmodernists do not commiserate chaos, meaninglessness and inconsistency. Instead, they celebrate them and attempt to discuss and review the conventional norms of literary genres; they discount the artistic rules that frame any production of art. They have rejected that there is any metanarrative to the world and undermined the high art's authority. This blurs the boundaries between the formerly

high and low genres. As a result, the postmodernist work is less unified and less accomplished; more muddled and more playful.

The postmodernist novel, however, has much in common with other genres of literature, yet is distinct by certain aspects such as length which may enhance the representation of any literary change. It depicts, plainly, the condensation on the reality's inner vision. The flexibility in the genre satisfies the writers' interest to deal with the traditional novel as well as the novels that may break with the literary convention. These elements set forth deep and broad progress of characters and their situation, which are more complex and involved, in order to pose a set of problems in the narrative. Novelists, in this sense, can flesh-out each character more fully and set up disparate visions to their narration. In addition, one of the defining attributes of this form is metafiction which offers, both the writer and the reader, a great deal of variety to construct and deconstruct the literary text.

Amis, in his novel, offers various postmodernist commentaries on the process of writing employing metafictional devices. This novel, however, echoes, in very different and often tortuous ways, the traditional standards of literature. Its overreaching title indicates and points out various sorts of paradoxes and offers the reader the initiative to delve into Amis's fictional world. Besides, it exhibits features recurrent in writings by British postmodernist novelists: parody, irony and playfulness. It reflects characteristics of the literature of the absurd in its minimalist stage setting, its seemingly meaningless dialogue and its apocalyptic or dystopian vision. A close look at many details in *London Fields* reveals how the examination of language, style and plots play significant roles in exhibiting the metafictional devices.

Accordingly, this study is formulated by a substantial question: if life is without meaning or purpose, can literature make them in the absurd world? In order to deal with this research question, the study has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation: what is the relevance of imitating traditional styles, forms or genres by metafictionists? To what extent does the representation of multiplicity of realities indicate the postmodernist vision of supreme values' loss in Martin Amis's novel? Why are the notions of self-consciousness and uncertainty problematic in this novel?

I argue that literature is no longer distinct or disparate from the changes in the world. It affects and, at times, is being influenced by the world conditions. The postmodernists' task is to blur the boundaries between life and art, and between reality and fiction. I, also, claim that Martin Amis could, distinctly, depict the themes that create a sense of absurdity and might be seen to intensify the metafictional features of the novel. He, then, provides a distinctive aspect to the use of metafiction by employing parody, irony and playfulness, in addition to the investigation of the self-conscious narrators, characters and fictional styles.

Much research on the relation between art and life has been done. Previous studies indicate that meaninglessness of life can be discussed in terms of literary frames. Some preliminary work about metafiction was carried out in the early 1980s by Patricia Waugh. In her book, *Metafiction: The Theory and practice of Self- Conscious Fiction* (1984), she mentions a kind of metafiction which edges the idea of absurdity. She nevertheless highlights this point mostly in American literature where the writers lean on the representation of people's loss of belief in any supreme authority and the inability to grasp the meaning of life.

In his groundbreaking book *The Contemporary Novelists of the Absurd* (1971), Charles B. Harris examines the correlation between Ihab Hassan's literature of silence and John Barth's literature of exhaustion where he explains how the postmodernists have dealt with the silence of literature by using exhausted forms.

Moreover, Douwe Wessel Fokkema and Johannes Willem Bertens, in their book *Approaching Postmodernism: Papers Presented at a Workshop on Postmodernism* (1984), suggest the idea that the playfulness of the metafictional novels can be examined in John Barth's novels, which provide commentaries on the process of writing. They claim that he could introduce the purposelessness of life in his narratives. They, also, call into questions some assumptions that draw parallels between the characters' absurd situation and authors' life experience while writing literature. Besides, they reinforce that Barth could introduce his view of the literature of exhaustion in some of his novels such as *The End of the Road* (1958).

The critic Neil Cornwell, in his book *The Absurd in Literature* (2006), illustrates how the British writer Flann O'Brien could blend the absurdity of life in his game-playing novels such as *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and *The Third Policeman* (1967); however, he considers him to be an early postmodernist writer.

Nevertheless, these studies do not, plainly, illustrate the indication of metafiction to absurdity. There is still considerable ambiguity with regard to correlation between individuals' existential questions of being and the state of the literary work.

In the light of these studies, this research is an attempt to examine the possibility of meaning in literature in a purposeless world. It also tries to investigate the significance of depicting disillusionment, loss and alienation in Martin Amis's postmodernist narrative

where the characters are strangely behaving and struggling with astronomical, ecological and nuclear disasters. It also tries to offer an illustration of anticipating their ultimately senseless actions and attitudes that generally call into question the existential concepts of certainty such as reality, truth and value. Moreover, it accounts for the characters' behaviour under circumstances that appear to be meaningless in the metafictional novel where the main interest of the writer is to comment, playfully and ironically, on style or literary genre.

This work clearly has some limitations. It attempts to establish the link between absurdist themes and metafictional devices in Martin Amis's novel. The main focus is on the analysis of the world's instability and its impact on literature. It investigates the relevance of the loss of values in shaping the overall structure of the postmodernist novel, *London Fields*. The deductions of the dissertation might or might not be generalised to other novel written by other writer, but I wish it would contribute to a better understanding of the topic.

In order to investigate the rationale of the research, the analytical and descriptive approaches are used to offer a comprehensive depiction of the topic. The overall structure of this research is divided into three main chapters. The first chapter gives a brief overview of literature's struggle to move from silence to exhaustion. It highlights the initiative that the postmodernist writer has chosen in order to cope with the change in the world history as well as the literary world. This chapter begins by examining the self-denial literature which destroys itself in Ihab Hassan's essay, and then it looks at the analysis of imitating previous literary genres or styles in John Barth's essay which is considered to be a response to Hassan's examination of silence.

However, the second chapter analyses the use of parody, irony and playfulness in Martin Amis's *London Fields*. It highlights how Amis, playfully, imitates and integrates the multiplicity of genres in order to lay bare the fictionality of his narrative. It explains the changes that it has stimulated within the tradition. It also, depicts the apocalyptic and dystopian features of the novel which reinforce the examination of absurdist themes as well as the playfulness that Amis employs.

The third chapter, then, investigates the construction as well as the deconstruction of the literary text. It examines the role of the reader to determine the plot of the novel. In this chapter, the relevance of the perspectives' multiplicity is examined. It, also, discusses the reliability of the writers' information in accordance with authorship and difficulties of writing. This discussion, then, proposes a smooth correlation between the examination of absurdist themes in the metafictional frame.

Chapter One

Absurdity in the Metafictional Novel

INTRODUCTION

The problematic relation of fiction and reality features as prevalent subject matter in postmodernist fiction. The attempt of writers to blur the borders between reality and fiction is based on the postmodernist view to perceive reality. Similarly, the absurdist narratives do not substantially employ the literary conventional rules. These narratives provide commentary on the meaninglessness of life and question the significance of the characters' roles, which illustrate the irrationality of their actions and attitudes in the fictional world. This chapter, then, raises a number of questions and attempts to offer answers to them. It, eventually, explores the basic premise of the metafictional as well as the absurdist novels in the postmodernist literature; therefore, the main interest of this chapter is to examine whether it is distinct and distinguished to highlight the absurdist tools that contribute to the metafictional frame.

I-1- Literature from Silence to Exhaustion

The manifestation of postmodernist ¹ novels is highly debated. There are, however, two modes of definition, both of which can be relevant to understanding the premise of postmodernist narratives. While the first facet refers to the literature of silence, the second mode indicates the literature of exhaustion. Actually, the literature of silence is introduced by the Arab American literary theorist and writer, Ihab Hassan (1925- 2015), in his essay, “The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett” (1967). It, eventually, refers to literature which, “turning against itself, aspires to silence, leaving us with uneasy imitations of outrage and apocalypse” (Hassan 74). Literature, according to Ihab Hassan, is moving toward silence where the characters of novels seem to be lost and attempt to look for accurate expressions to communicate; and also wait for a silent reader in order to make the existence of the symbols which are unuttered but written on the pages.

Yet, Hassan does not intend to present the literal meaning of silence through the silent world, nor is he troubled by the writers who bring to an end their artistic production. Clearly, he refers to silence as the new attitude chosen by literature toward itself. He goes to say that “silence in the new literature is attained through radical irony – a term [he applies] to any statement that contains its own ironic denial” (77). For instance, the confession of the Cretan that all Cretans are liars or the machine of Tinguely which “has no function but to destroy itself” (Hassan 75) can serve as examples of self- destruction and radical irony.

¹ Postmodernism refers “to the phase of 20th –century Western culture that succeeded the reign of high [modernism], thus indicating the products of the age of mass television since the mid 1950s. Postmodernity, not to be equated with postmodernism, is promoted by Jean Baudrillard and other commentators. It is “a culture of fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra, and promiscuous superficiality” (Baldick 201).

Likewise, writers, such as Henry Miller (1891-1980) and Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), present paradoxically the task of literature as a fulfilment of its self-denial. Literature, eagerly, has sought for noting about its elements while bothering the reader to deconstruct any production of literature. It is a revolt which is presented through an outrage that results in nothingness and also exhaustion.

Thus, the new literature of writers, such as Samuel Beckett, does not only demonstrate outrage, violence and apocalypse but also absurdity; it serves as a device that manifests silence. Laying down the idea of absurdity can crack down the writer as well as turn away his task. Albert Camus (1913-1960), the French philosopher, goes to say that "creating or not creating changes nothing" (qtd. in Hassan 75). Likewise, Ihab Hassan deduces that the absurdist creator cannot highly value his work and rather dismiss it; he considers art as danger in this sense. Clearly, he distinguishes between older modernist and newer postmodernist literature of silence, suggesting a crucial break and clarifying the continuity between the two.

In other words, the challenge that the new literature offers is a kind of violence that "turns men to things" (Hassan 74); and stresses "the force of evasion (or absence)" (Hassan 74), because it "strikes at the roots and induces a great silence" (Hassan 74). It also presents absurdity in literature indicating the significance that "no meaning or value can be assigned to it" (Hassan 74). Accordingly, Hassan claims that what is new in the new literature is that it refuses order and purpose while struggling silence.

The postmodernist paradox, on the one hand, holds a self- destruction as well as self reflection. It manifests a tendency toward self- consciousness about the novel which calls attention to its status as a production; on the other hand, it points out a sense of meaninglessness, purposelessness and chaos.

Similarly, John Barth (b. 1930), the American writer, in his essay “The Literature of Exhaustion” (1967) asserts, “I get ... an esthetic of silence. Beckett is moving toward silence, refining language out of existence, working toward the point where there is nothing more to say” (qtd. in Harris 102). He adds, “Borges writes as if literature had already been done and he’s writing footnotes of imaginary texts” (qtd. in Harris 102).

This quotation indicates briefly the correlation and convergence between Hassan’s contribution to clarify the move of literature toward its silence and the necessity that leads the postmodernist writer to employ the used-up forms and novels, as Barth illustrates. Actually, these two models of writers, Beckett and Borges, break the literary paradox of re-envisioning and settling the nature of fiction and its relation to reality. Barth, himself, has encountered literature of exhaustion in some of his works.

In other words, Molloy, the protagonist of *Molloy* (1955), a novel written by Samuel Beckett, speaks of the silence that the universe has been made of and it is metaphorically the silence of Beckett. Silence was a striking aspect of literary works as it reflected the power of absence and emptiness.

Moreover, Barth considers both Jorge Luis Borges (1899- 1986) and Samuel Beckett the successors of James Joyce (1882-1941) and Franz Kafka (1883-1924) as well as the second model for contemporary novelists. Like Joyce and Kafka “‘concluded’ the particular form of the novel they developed, so have Beckett and Borges brought their version of the novel to another kind of conclusion” (Harris 102); therefore, the alternative provided by the traditional novelistic models, then, seem to be “‘technically old-fashioned’ forms, on the one hand and simple silence, on the other” (Harris102).

John Barth, then, illustrates the two alternatives which the modern novelistic models provide, and then offers a third alternative. While the first and second alternatives are simple silence and “technically old- fashioned” forms (Harris 102), the third alternative is, mainly, the ironic imitation. He reinforces the fact that it is about where the novel emerged “with Quixote imitating Amadis of Gaul, Cervantes pretending to be the Cid Hamete Benegeli (and Alonso Quijano pretending to be Don Quixote), or Fielding parodying Richardson” (Barth 72). However, he points out the fact that the postmodernist writer can create “something new” (Barth 72), which “may be quite serious and passionate despite its farcical aspect” (Barth 72).

Moreover, John Barth illustrates the idea of exhausted literature and states that “by ‘exhaustion’ [he does not] mean anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence, only the used-upness of certain forms or the felt exhaustion of certain possibilities-by no means necessarily a cause for despair’ (Barth 64). This implies that exhaustion does not refer to arduousness or even laboriousness but it, obviously, entails the idea of the task of the postmodernist novelist to sustain an artistic production making use of works that have already existed. Likewise, a numerous recent novelists write, what Barth calls, “turn- of- the-century-type novels” (Barth 66), which refer to novels that are up- to- date while they are concerned with current topics and about contemporary individuals, and the authors ironically comment on “the genre and history of the art than on the state of the culture” (Barth 69).

Putting it differently, instead of silence, postmodernist writers have adopted new way which is imitation of old forms, old novels and old styles. These features indicate briefly the correlation between Hassan’s contribution to clarify the move of literature toward its silence and the necessity that leads postmodernist writer to employ the used-up

forms and novels as John Barth illustrates. Actually, both of these authors break the literary paradox of re-envisioning and settling the nature of fiction and its relation to reality. Barth, himself, has encountered literature of exhaustion in some of his works.

Furthermore, the Quixote is not assigned to Borges as his work. Yet, Pierre Menard, his fictional creation, is a reconstruction and rewriting of it and can be thought out as “a remarkable and original work of literature” (Barth 69). This originality of Borges’s novels is put in plain words when Barth justifies that “the implicit theme of which is the difficulty perhaps the unnecessary, of writing original works of literature” (Barth 69). To put it more simply, the writer poses questions about the complexity of composing a novel. In addition, he claims that the artistic victory of Borges is that “he confronts an intellectual dead end and employs it against itself to accomplish new human work” (69). This implies that as literature moves to its end, the postmodernist writer acts as a lifesaver by handling and manipulating it and then creating a new original novel.

Besides, one of Borges’s editors claims that “for [Borges] no one has claim to originality in literature” (Barth 73), and “every writer creates his own precursors” (74). The Canadian Professor, Linda Hutcheon (1947), in her book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), asserts this problem of literature and how postmodernism can negotiate the paradox by arguing that “no narrative can be natural *master narrative*” (13), but postmodernism could successfully “challenge narratives that do presume “master” status, without necessarily assuming that status for itself” (13). Patricia Waugh comes to a similar conclusion and asserts that the contemporary author “believes that to write a ‘great work’ of literature simply involves the provision of a reference catalogue of existing ‘great works’” (47).

In other words, the postmodernist writer depends in writing his text upon a previous text, borrowing pieces of literature and taking up exhausted literary material. Barth comments on parodying an imitative or old artistic production that “for one to attempt to add overtly to the sum of ‘original’ literature by even so much as a conventional short story not to mention a novel, would be too naive, literature has been done long since” (Barth 73), questioning the possibility of the uniqueness and innovation of postmodernist literature. He demonstrates that the postmodernist writers struggle the idea that there is nothing left to be written.

Barth, also, mentions that Borges is interested in writing about writing since it disturbs readers metaphysically. He, then, portrays the core feature of postmodernist novels as “novels which imitate the form of the Novel, by an author who imitates the role of Author” (72). He declares that reading about readers and authors as characters may create an image of exhausting the possibilities of novelty. In his opinion, the possibilities of literature have been depleted and drained since the literary modes were ‘used up.’ New ways of re-using the old ones were set as the final solution to keep art alive. Thus, he explores an important concept in metafictional narratives which is originality and reveals his attitude toward the state of literature by arguing that writers like Beckett and Borges were able to create new pieces of literary works by parodying old texts and ironising the question of fiction nature.

Mapping this sense of recomposing old artistic production, his writings are made from other writings and are not drawn from life but from readings, putting forward an innovative form of reading. It is an imitation of another imitation. Amadis of Gaul is imitated by Quixote, and Richardson is imitated by Fielding, but the subject is “life not

the documents” (Barth 72). Moreover, Barth makes a clear distinction between imitation in Richardson’s epistolary novels and imitation in Borges’s novels discussing the use of parody as well as imitation by both novelists. The postmodernist novels’ subject, then, is the representation of the document not the representation of life; and the postmodernist novelists “don’t imitate ‘life’ at all, but other novels, other forms, other styles” (Harris 23).

Moreover, Zhengshuan, in his book *A Companion to American Literature* (2006) distinguishes between early writers of the absurd and late writers of the absurd. He claims that the major difference between them is that while “the former represent the absurdity theme essentially in the traditional novelist devices, the latter tend to regard the conventional novel as literature of exhaustion” (188). In the light of this quotation, the writers of the absurd can be writers of traditional literature who take life and attempt to represent reality by giving this life structure and form, or writers who manipulate the exhausted literature. Yet, both of them are fully aware that nothing can make sense to the human existence and both thematise the universe as absurd. While early works represent the absurdity of life, later works concentrate on the deconstruction and construction of narratives as puzzles and games.

Besides, the old conventions and ways, that are used to represent absurdity, have been reflected by the changes in the postmodernist world, and then they should be updated according to postmodernist perspectives. Zhengshuan, then, goes to say that “these conventions must be updated, while at the same time new devices should be found” (188). Thus, the world that the postmodernist writer has created is the reproduction of previous and worn-out forms, novels and styles because this writer has lost the ability to represent

the real world where he lives. The character in such novels learns to survive in a world full of meaninglessness and to achieve this living behind absurdity.

Furthermore, the postmodernist writer brings up many questions and a few answers. This sense of loss or incompleteness that the characters experience is represented from postmodernist perspective. Mapping that sense of loss and incomprehensiveness, Cornwell explains the description of Patricia Waugh in her examination of a category of metafiction which borders on the absurd:

In Watt 'the attempt to describe thoroughly a simple act of physical progression of taking a step forward, leads to extreme (and finally absurd) narrative regression' (Waugh, 152, n.7. Emphasis hers) regression and reversal, in perambulation is matched by the same motion in discourse. The choreography of the joint ambulatory aspect of the intercurrent between Watt and Sam (hands mutually on shoulders, paces forward and back, turning as one man 'up and down, up and down, we paced between the fences'), Watt backwards and Sam forwards, precisely elaborated (Watt, 150 ;161). Matching this bizarre motion, is the regressive mode of Watt's diction. (273)

Actually, Beckett's *Watt* (1953) is not an easy novel to examine, to paraphrase or to summarise as it celebrates the narrative voice and the silence that may engulf it. The narrative voice highlights the object while it is conscious of itself. Thus, this way of representation is explored, thematised and justified. Watt regresses to his inability to compose sentences and instead uses isolated or short phrases. Also, he is not able to name objects. This bizarre motion, then, portrays the search not for *the* meaning but for *a* meaning [my emphasis]. Gestures in Beckett's narrative act more truthfully than words. Man can use language as a tool so as to deal with the world, but Watt's physical progression may result in the narrative regression.

In fact, updating the old devices such as parody permits contemporary novelists to discard the traditional forms and styles, and at the same time continue to employ them.

This results in the use of “the fallacy of imitative form’ by attempting to reproduce absurdity through an ‘anti- style” (qtd.in Harris 23).

In the light of this analysis, the writers of the absurd can employ exhausted forms of literature ironically as an alternative to silence. Yet, they do not employ language, style, fictionality and narrative structures as tools but as the subject matter of literature and as the content’s core; retelling the story has become a vital part of the narrative.

Hence, the postmodernist writers use metafiction and absurdity in literature as vehicles, which help to highlight paradoxically the non-existing structure while using structure itself, in order to examine and explore the question of meaning, life and existence. Besides, they use absurdist themes and characters, which behave irrationally in addition to some situations to question if meaning really exists. They, also, disregard all the conventional rules since they no longer enjoy being guided by the universally accepted guidelines in literature.

I-2-Understanding Metafiction and Absurdity in Literature

I-2-1- Plotting Against Fiction: The Metafictional Aspects

Metafiction causes considerable disturbance to readers, partly because it poses questions about the nature of storytelling and the relationship between fiction and reality. The term metafiction “might be new, [but] the practice is as old (if not older) than the novel itself” (Waugh 5). The term is coined by the American critic William H. Gass (Waugh 3), in his essay “Philosophy and the Form of Fiction” (1970). Actually, it is primarily originated to the rise of postmodernist literature from which “novelists have tended to become much more aware of the theoretical issues involved in constructing fictions” (Waugh 2).

Moreover, Waugh defines the term ‘metafiction’ as “the fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (Waugh 2). As far as art and life are concerned, metafiction is the possibility of fiction to ‘create’ fiction through self- consciousness and also the possibility to investigate the fictionality of the world outside the fictional text. According to Waugh, there are three varieties or ranges of fiction. While some novels make use of fictionality and reality as themes, the interpretation and recontextualisation of other texts are permitted.

Surely, the use of metafiction in twentieth- century literature is undeniable. Thus, the postmodernist writers accomplish their works on the basis of self-consciousness in addition to employing self-conscious techniques in order to remind the reader that this is only a story, not to be confused with reality.

Another important feature of metafiction that should be examined is parody. Actually, postmodernist parody problematises history and ironises the politics of representation, though it “does not disregard the context of the past representations but uses irony to acknowledge the fact that we are inevitably separated from the past” (Hutcheon 94). Actually, the importance of employing the context of the past stems from the fact that it creates continuity and difference and at the same time keeps the potentiality of being detached or disconnected with the past ironically.

In other words, the power of the representation of history can be challenged by rereading and revising the past. One may misconceive postmodernist parody and consider it nostalgic. This is not true, because the aim of parody is to ironise and criticise. Critics such as Patricia Waugh and Linda Hutcheon have explored both parody and metafiction. As a form of metafiction, parody serves to show the construction of art and reflects its artificiality instead of hiding it. As a matter of fact, it is a difficult task to separate parody and metafiction. Both of them achieve similar aim which is “defamiliarizing fictional conventions that have become both automatized and inauthentic, and release new and more authentic forms” (Waugh 65).

Hence, Metafiction lays bare the relationship between life and fiction and parody rejects the ordered fiction and reality and creates a new and alternative world that manifests the creation of a literary work. Moreover, what metafiction does is what the Russian formalists call “laying bare the device” (Waugh 65). To put it more simply, the literary work manifests itself through an inherent self-conscious parody, defamiliarising the literary conventions and rejecting the tradition. It is a response to a quest that results from a crisis that exists within the novel itself. Yet, it does not radically

break the norms, it lays them bare and then shifts from representing the historical and cultural systems to revealing and examining the literary system and its relation with them, or “implicitly [historicising] literary tradition” (Waugh 66).

Accordingly, Waugh’s idea is similar to that of John Barth. Barth claims that instead of silence, the postmodernist writer makes use of the exhausted forms to create a new literary work. Waugh also leans towards the claim of renewing literature instead of exhaustion and considers the use of parody as positive by providing the Russian formalist theory that “it is useful anyway to look more closely at the specifically literary system to discover to what extent generic change may be brought about by internal pressure” (65). As far as Barth’s notion is concerned, Waugh argues that, “parody renews and maintains the relationship between form and what it can express, by upsetting a previous balance which has become so rigidified that the conventions of the form can express only a limited or even irrelevant content” (68).

Another important feature which highlights the metafictional devices is self-consciousness. Self-consciousness, here, refers to the eagerness or the ability of fiction to find out and reveal its nature in the text itself and to reveal the nature of the world outside the text. The process of constructing a metafictional novel provides a clear understanding of the experiences that individuals go through. Obviously, these individuals monopolise “roles rather than selves” (Waugh 3). In other words, it affords a comprehensive realisation of the world outside the novels through analysing the role of characters. The necessity of ‘meta’ levels of discourse and experience lies in realising the link between language and the world, which has mainly resulted from the deep as well as the considerable understanding of self-consciousness and self-exploration. Actually, the writers of

metafiction are able to represent the discourse of life rather than life itself. This tendency reveals the instability of the fiction's language and establishes the identity of the novels through highlighting the complex nature of fiction. Besides, the valuableness of employing metafiction is not limited to questioning consciousness and fictionality, but it also helps to recognise the value of construction as an important postmodernist notion for examining reality, fiction, history and subjectivity. Thus, a reader can easily analyse the aspects of fiction through reading instead of using literary theories and criticism.

Accordingly, the interest of postmodernist writers lies in the fact that metafiction not only poses questions about its current condition but also about how man can construct his world's experience, and simultaneously can "explore a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction" (Waugh 2).

Moreover, Mark Currie depicts metafiction as "a borderline discourse, a kind of writing which places itself on the border between fiction and criticism which takes the border as its subject" (2). Literally, the significance of Currie's definition lies in the fact that it adds another sense to the term metafiction by locating it within the postmodernist literature, theories and criticism. Yet, he does not mean that the author of metafiction is both a writer and critic but an author who writes a novel which dramatises the boundary between fiction and criticism. This can be realised "through an internal boundary between art and life that the novel develops the self commentary that gives it critical self-consciousness" (Currie 4).

In this light, self-consciousness, as a crucial tenet of postmodernism, displays fiction not to be read as if it was actually real. For instance, the faithful representation of the real world in many realist novels describe any detail that makes the reader believe that

it was not a piece of literature. It may also result in his awareness of the important issues of the day. In fact, the traditional literature attempts to answer the questions of the human mind's possibility to understand nature. Generally, it can depict some stories that could have happened to individuals in some believable situations and can deal with similar struggles such as Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) where the writer provides the reader with full explanation and description of Thomas Gradgrind's life, his philosophy of rationalism and fact. The events of the novel could be faced by the reader, and this novel, then, does not draw attention to its fictionality. Both the author and the reader share the impact of forgetting the presence of fiction. As a matter of fact, postmodernist fiction does not pretend to be real. On the contrary, it exhibits to the reader its fictionality and calls attention to its artificiality through self-consciousness in addition to its self-reflexivity which highlights the revisiting and the re-reading of previous works and texts. In other words, it is to write what is already written while the focus of the writer is on the writing process.

Actually, Metafiction may appear in novels as old as Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, which was originally published in 1605, Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749) and Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1760) (Waugh 24). *Tristram Shandy*, for instance, "parodies the *structural* conventions and motifs of the novel itself [Waugh's italics]" (Waugh 74). It can be described as "a novel about itself, thoroughly 'aesthetic' in Shklovsky's use of the term, a novel about the transformation of its 'story' into 'plot'" (Waugh 70). An example of this use is when Tristram asks his reader, "bear with me – and let me go on and tell my story in my own way" (Waugh 26).

Some more examples of contemporary metafictional works could be Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller* (1979) which introduces to the reader a more functional

way that indicates the metafictional devices this writer uses. At the very beginning of his novel, he, directly, addresses the reader stating that, “The novel begins in a railway station . . . a cloud of smoke hides the first part of the paragraph” (qtd. in Waugh 47). Such a way often reminds the reader of the fact that, “descriptions in novels are always creations of that which is to be described: that the language in this sense refers ultimately to itself” (Waugh 47). It also points out “the status of the book as an *artifact*” where there are plenty of “missing pages, pages stuck together, disordered pages” (Waugh 47), or as a reference to its “*intertextual* existence through the fragments of novels, stories and narratives embedded within the outer frame [Waugh’s italics]” (Waugh 47). This fragmentation points out the commentaries that fiction, which self-consciously, lays bare the fictionality of its status. Yet, Waugh differentiates and distinguishes between self-consciousness in traditional and contemporary novels. She argues that the novel is “always inherently self-conscious, always inherently provisional in its process of relativizing language through continuous assimilation of discourses, has now and again to stop and examine the process, to see where it is going, to find out what it is” (67-68). This indicates that the novel, systematically, tends to highlight its linguistic construction. In contemporary novel, nevertheless, self-consciousness is prevailing. It is the prevalent feature of this novel “*as a whole* [Waugh’s italics]” (Waugh 68). This indicates the fact that self-consciousness is a tendency of the contemporary novel though it appeared in traditional novels such as *Tristram Shandy*. This stems from the fact that the former is “coping with it *as a major crisis* [Waugh’s italics]” (Waugh 68) which is an indication not to its decline but to its “renewed vigour” (Waugh 68). In other words, the novel draws attention to the process of writing not to weaken its state as a literary genre. On the contrary, it strengthens its validity in introducing the linguistic construction.

I-2-2- Framing the Labyrinth of Absurdity: A Postmodernist Reading

The term absurdity has aroused the interest of the current critical thinking the same way as have ‘alienation’ and ‘disillusionment’ in the past. Yet, absurdity has been defined differently by many critics. Various qualities may contribute to better understanding of this term.

The Hungarian-born English dramatist, Martin Esslin (1918- 2002), in his article “The Absurdity of the Absurd” (1960), highlights the source of confusion of terms between the meaning of the term ‘absurd’ in English and ‘*absurde*’ in French. He goes to say that the New English Dictionary defines it as follows: “Out of harmony with reason or propriety; incongruous, unreasonable, illogical. In modern use especially plainly opposed to reason and hence ridiculous, silly” (670). After that, he reinforces the fact that the meaning *ridiculous* does not arise in the French dictionary, arguing: “[Le] Petit Larousse defines *absurde* merely as *contraire à la raison, à sens commun* [Esslin’s italics]” (670). In addition, he asserts that the essay of Albert Camus ‘Myth of Sisyphus,’ (the translated version of ‘Le Mythe de Sisyphe’, 1942), ascribes absurdity “not because the human condition is funny, but because it is deeply tragic in an age when the loss of belief in God and human progress has eliminated the meaning of existence and has made human existence essentially purposeless and hence plainly *opposed to reason*[Esslin’s italics]” (670).

In addition, Neil Cornwell, in his book *The Absurd in Literature* (2006), states that the etymology of the word has been taken to be connected with Latin derivation *absurdum* which literally refers to “out of deafness” (3). He differentiates between the noun *absurd* and *absurdism*. Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary defines *absurd* as “the state or

condition in which man exists in an irrational and meaningless universe and in which man's life has no meaning outside his own existence" (qtd. in Cornwell 3). Absurdism can be defined as a philosophical school of thought which explores the fundamental nature of the absurd and "the belief that [man's] search for order brings him into conflict with his universe" (qtd. in Cornwell 3). M.R. Haight defines absurdity as, "not to be equated with The Absurd, a term that suggests one particular school" (qtd. in Cornwell 22).

However, the use of derivative words of the "'absurd' ('absurdly', 'absurdity' etc.), even when repeatedly employed, may not constitute any guarantee that a work is to be regarded as [...] what [Cornwell] may choose to consider 'literature of the absurd'" (Cornwell 100). For instance, Paul Celan (1920-1970), the German-language poet and translator, "would not normally be categorised [...] as an absurdist poet" (100); yet, he "defined true poetry as an "absurdity"" (qtd. in Cornwell 100). In addition, the literary productions of an absurdist writer, like Samuel Beckett, are "absurd not because of the absence of meaning – then they would be irrelevant - but because they debate meaning" (qtd. in Slocombe 216). Besides, the absurd can be "spelt without the capital letter and mostly without quotation mark" (Cornwell 2); yet, Jeanette Winterson, an English writer, says, "Now I knew that Jean-Paul Satre and Mr Camus were right when they claimed it is the Absurd that matters. The Absurd with a most capital A" (Cornwell 2).

Moreover, the absurd can be defined as a term which is "derived from the [existentialism] of Albert Camus, and often applied to the modern sense of human purposelessness in a universe without meaning or value" (Baldick1). It is originated in the work of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855); but it was more plainly developed by Albert Camus in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus " and his works

of absurdist fiction. Likewise, Camus asserts that Kierkegaard, Franz Kafka and Lev Isaakovich Shestov (1866 – 1938), a Russian philosopher, as among “those existentialist novelists and philosophers completely oriented towards the absurd and its consequences” (Cornwell 186). In fact, Kierkegaard preferred to avert the meaningless by “leaping into faith” (21).

Unlike Kierkegaard, both Martin Heidegger (1889 - 1976), the German philosopher, and Jean Paul Sartre (1905 - 1980), the French philosopher and novelist, were interested in the question of ontology as well as ‘becoming’, and shared the same pessimistic view of human existence. The question of Heidegger, “why is there anything at all and not rather nothing” (qtd. in Cornwell 4) was called by Donald Allen Crosby, a Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at Colorado State University since January 2009, “that favourite question of Western philosophers” (qtd. in Cornwell 4). Actually, Heidegger’s main book was entitled *Being and Time* (German: *Sein und Zeit* 1927) where he reinforces the fact that one can not refer to human being without referring to the concept of being, which is in German ‘Sein’. He says that man is not always ‘Sein’, but ‘Dasein’ or ‘Da-sein, which means “to be there” (Cornwell 28) or “the process of being” (Slocombe 32). Man is always in a particular time and particular place. It indicates the sense of thrownness in a particular place and despair.

After the World War II, Western man felt himself lost and alienated. Accordingly, Albert Camus claims that ‘there is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide’ (qtd. in Kuçlu 161). Camus’s “Myth of Sisyphus” not only reinforces the purposelessness of life, in addition to despair, but also attempts to debate the question of “suicide” (Cornwell 125); it points out the tendency of “begin again” (Cornwell 20). The myth is about “a constant uphill struggle which must eternally begin again as the stone

inevitably rolls downhill again” (Cornwell 20); it is “a metaphor for the concertina model of the universe (the theory according to which a cyclic universe will alternately expand and collapse inward on itself)” (Cornwell 20). Camus’s essay, then, is “fundamental treatise of the absurd” and his considerable contribution was artistic since he “created a fictional image of it” (qtd. in Cornwell 114).

Hence, the exaltation of Camus’s absurd hero in the world, and his attempt to achieve meaning, results in keeping stance of contemptuous revolt. In his way to search for meaning, his hero faces paradoxes and contradictions of life. Furthermore, he re-evaluates what he used to believe it was *true* [my emphasis]. Thus, the final step in his search is accepting the absurd.

Therefore, these connotations indicate that both the concepts absurdity and absurdism refer to philosophical school of thoughts, while the absurd refers to man’s desire to seek inherent meaning and his inability to find any. Absurdity, then, is a concept, a keyword and a theme which indicates the fundamental nature of the absurd while embracing the absurdist condition of human existence.

Moreover, Beckett provides a comprehensive definition of the use of absurdity in literature and says that:

Absurdity in its dramas and novels reflects the attitudes that there is no meaning in the universe. It also reflects the view that human life is meaningless and futile. It suggests that living in such a condition man’s life become absurd. In absurd plays and novels human beings are portrayed as isolated from others, a situation that existed in Europe, during and after the Second World War. (qtd . in Patil 2)

The purposelessness of life is presented in literature through absurdity which shows up the rebellion of the individual to come up with his alienation in the universe. It indicates

and points out the individual's perspective as well as perception of the world with a sense of loss and alienation that hang over Western people (characters), as a result of the horror of the wars and the conflicts.

Besides, the language of absurdist novels, according to Eugene McNamara (1930-2016), a poet and a Professor Emeritus in the Department of English at the University of Windsor, employs "lexical distortions, meaningless puns, and insistent repetition of empty words, clichés, exaggeration, and deliberately misplaced particulars and juxtaposed incongruous details" (qtd. In. Harris). In other words, absurdity which is found in novels is characterised by some features, namely irrationality, incomprehensible situations, disorderliness, irrelevance, meaninglessness, purposelessness and isolated characters with disconnected dialogues.

Actually, the absurdist fiction should be distinguished from the Theatre of the Absurd and from existentialism and nihilism. Though, existentialism indicates the dislocation that man feels, "for more commentators, absurdity is to be equated with nihilism" (Cornwell 4) and "the absurd, then, is born of nihilism, out of existentialism, fuelled by the certainty of death" (Cornwell 5). The main distinguishing feature between absurdity and existentialism is "the extent to which rationality is used" (Slocombe 207). Actually, the emphasis of absurd art is mainly on the "abandonment of rational artistic devices" (Slocombe 208). Consequently, absurd art "is ... more akin to clearly postmodernism than it is to existentialism" (Slocombe 208).

In this light, it is substantial to distinguish between two extreme depicting modes of the absurd in postmodernism: the absurd situation and the absurd perspective.

Slocombe illustrates the difference between the two distinct forms as:

The 'absurd perspective' is seen when the reader is presented with a way of seeing the world that they will (probably) have never considered. Texts such as Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989) and Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) epitomise the aspect of absurdity ... The 'absurd situation' novel, in contrast, places the reader in a world that mirrors their own ... In such novels, narrative action revolves around an irrational series of events. Rather than forcing a different *local* perception on the reader (as an 'absurd perspective' would do), this form of absurd novel forces them to reappraise their *global* perception of events. (Slocombe 214)

Accordingly, the quotation illustrates the main features of both 'the absurd perspective' and 'the absurd situation'. The latter is so common feature in most of the postmodernist narratives because it occurs when the reader is introduced to a depiction of a world that he is familiar with. He, then, does not find himself in front of a different perception and view of the world from his own. Also, it compels and urges the reader to figure out and re-examine his viewpoint or insight of the different situations. The former, however, introduces the reader to a distinct and disparate view of perceiving the world.

In the shadow of postmodernism, absurdity is put together with the depiction of the self-conscious techniques and devices because the "postmodern absurd functions in order to force readers to question their own awareness, to question the world in which they live" (Slocombe 215). It is a key word which highlights the impact for human view of life it holds with itself.

In addition, novels like Jean Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938) and Camus's *The Stranger* (1942) dramatise and employ the themes that are received as examples for examining absurdity in novels. Also, it should be added that the absurdist fiction makes use of dark humour, satire and the nihilistic themes in order to explore the human experience of incompleteness, meaninglessness, loneliness and loss. It also investigates how man

responses to this irrationality and meaninglessness, namely escapism and the conscious construction of the world. It, then, provides a commentary on the absurdity of life, highlights the premise that life has no meaning and order and celebrates disillusionment by introducing chaos, and irrational elements in the world.

Quoting from Barthelme's book "I was wrong, Peterson thought, the world is absurd. The absurdity is punishing me for not believing in it. I affirm the absurdity. On the other hand, absurdity is itself absurd" (qtd. in Fokkema and Bertens 202). The authors of *Approaching Postmodernism* comment on this sense of absurdity by clarifying how the postmodernist authors could handle it within the postmodernist frame particularly in Barth's works. They say that "this is the absurd view which relates to the tragic view of the tragic view of the tragic view that was postulated in Barth's letters" (Fokkema and Bertens 202).

In order to explain the reason behind this use, the writers, Fokkema and Bertens, state that it is a spontaneous and impulsive human reaction to a borderline existential situation. The ironic view of existentialism is ironised by Barth in a paradoxical humanistic fashion by love. Moreover, more opportunity and ambiguity were given to comedy. Within this argument, tragedy can turn to absurd through irony. So, instead of ironising life, writers ironise traditional forms of literature. Waugh also comes to similar conclusion and claims that "[t]he self-conscious literary irony is clearly secondary to the pathos and absurdity of the represented human situation" (57).

It seems fitting to add that the inability of the individual to find out a rational meaning or order in his life is similar to the inability of the writer to come up with his novel. Early writers of the absurd focused on the purposelessness of the universe and of

the individual's life while the interest of the late absurdist writers is to raise questions on the production and creation of art.

Furthermore, many metafictional novelists have been interested in the quest of freedom. For instance, Muriel Spark (1918-2006), a Scottish novelist, and the English novelist, John Fowles (1926- 2005), relate the idea of freedom of man to the playfulness or role playing in novels and to the relation between an author and his characters. Fowles states that "pretending your characters are free can only be a game" (qtd . in Waugh 119). Spark claims that "in fiction characters are trapped within the novelist's script, and in 'reality' people are part of the book written by the hand of God" (Waugh 119). Their interest in freedom is "a consequence of the perceived analogy between plot in fiction and the 'plot' of God's creation" (Waugh 120). In other words, the postmodernists' rejection of the conventional norms of fiction and the characters' awareness of their situation as well as their relationship to their (God) is similar to the consciousness of real people of their existential situation.

In addition, Jorge Louis Borges states that "if the characters of a fictional work can be the readers or spectators, we, its readers or spectators, can be fictitious" (Waugh 127). This is the absurd view of individual's existence which is poured in postmodernist literature. It raises ontological questions about the human nature as well as the nature of fiction that every man can write his own life; because "the absurd can be a paradoxical attitude in that the conceptualization of the absurd couples 'qualitative' consciousness and an active 'quantitative' rebellion , and thus contains a contradiction" (Fokkema and Bertens 199). Hence, the metafictional features border on the absurd. Absurdity in literature brings up many questions but a few answers. Man seeks for inherent value

and sense of life. Thus, a conflict arises and he becomes unable to find them. Metafiction and absurdity, then, raise questions about reality not to provide answers but to celebrate or accept the ambiguity and contradictions within the relation between literature, the individual and the world. The characters of the postmodernist novel face an absurd world and realise that finding any order is arbitrary. In point of fact, the ontological peculiarity of 'problematizing' language and fiction challenges the traditional convention of the novel by creating paradoxes, oppositions and contradictions ironically.

On that account, postmodernist novels demonstrate the possibility of self-conscious deconstruction in addition to the reflective construction as it is shown in the works of "Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller and Thomas Pynchon [who] use the images and techniques of comic books" (Fokkema and Bretens 223), and instead of "modelling their protagonists and their deeds and dreams on examples from the classics, they imitate popular forms of entertainment" (Fokkema and Bretens 223). They present the labyrinth of absurdity in the realm of the metafictional narratives. In this instance, writing about writing, imitating another style, form or genre and commenting on them are metafictional devices. They come out with a sense of uneasiness and disturbance. The authors as well as the readers are themselves the characters. These characters experience a world which is primarily absurd, incongruous. The postmodernist writers of prose fiction have reinforced the absurd nature of human existence and celebrated the absurd or meaningless misunderstanding of contemporary existence. Thus, art and life are no longer plainly distinguishable. In many instances, this view has also been attached to the use of metafiction in literature, which lays bare the fictionality of narratives; as it undermines the traditional norms of literature.

I-3- The Metafictional Absurd in Some Novels

In *The Absurd in Literature*, the author describes Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939) and *The Third Policeman* (1967) as metafictional absurd. In terms of self-reflexivity, they destabilise the traditional barriers and break the boundaries between the various levels of existence. *At Swim-Two-Birds* presents itself as a first-person story by an unnamed Irish student of literature who sets three stories in motion. This drunk student lives with his uncle in Dublin and spends time reading and composing a novel about Dermot Trellis, a second-rate author whose characters ultimately rebel against him and he pays dearly for his bad writing. Cornwell introduces the metafiction's use in O'Brien's novel quoting that:

We have had books inside books before now, and characters who are given life outside their fiction, but O'Nolan takes Pirandello and Gide a long way further. The screw is turned until you have (a) a book about a man called Trellis who is (b) writing a book about certain characters who (c) are turning the tables on Trellis by writing about him.

(qtd. In Cornwell 260)

The use of playfulness and metafictional techniques place the novelist as a very early postmodernist writer. This novel allows the text to examine its own existence by using a story within a story within a story. Thus, it constitutes a sense of (non-) ending as if the text was both open and close.

Besides, this text has four beginnings in addition to three endings. The three beginnings introduce three of the main characters namely, the PookaMacPhellimey, Mr. John Furriskey and Finn Mac Cool, including this example of the opening of the novel which portrays the way to begin a book: "One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with" (qtd. in Brooke-Rose 112).The narrator in the novel adds, "A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in

the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings” (qtd. in Brooke-Rose 112).

Actually, the multiplicity of endings and beginnings of this novel suggests that it is inter-related in the ‘*prescience of the author*’ [my emphasis] and embraces the characters’ interpretations. In other words, it does not concern the ‘*real*’ world of the text but the sub world of the character or narrators [my emphasis]. Unlike the modernists who use dialogism which is the employment of multiple voices within a text in order to generate an atmosphere of fragmentation within the modernist novel, O’Brien uses it so as to present one point of view after another. This facilitates to him to identify them as ridiculous. Furthermore, truth is absent and the outflow of the novel interchanges between absurdity and realism. At the beginning Trellis is safe, but his maltreatment of the characters that he creates, results in the rebellion against him. These beginnings and ends show the playfulness achieved through the narrative voice which may result in ambiguity. Jorge Luis Borges describes the novel as not only a “labyrinth [but also] a discussion of the many ways to conceive of the Irish novel and a repertory of exercises in prose and verse or parody all the styles of Ireland” (qtd. in Cornwell 260).

In fact, it ridicules the Irish tradition and parodies the storytelling of the legendary hero through the description of Finn Mac Cool. This novel gathers parody, satire, playfulness and absurdity in the realm of metafiction. It discusses the creation of fiction and encourages the reader to participate in the discourse’s authenticity.

Moreover, in their study entitled “The Metafictional Absurd in John Barth’s Novels”, Fokkema and Bertens claim that Barth’s novels are the best example of integrating the possibilities of postmodernist use of the absurd as he could combine

philosophy with fiction which was standard for the postmodernist writer. John Barth discusses the ironic view of existential position, and the way he integrates Camus's absurd consciousness in this ironic handling. In "*The End of the Road*," the critics say, "Barth calls the static, immutable and thus 'absolute' absurd consciousness that must paralyse all activity (as it actually does in Beckett's novels and dramas), in an ironic allusion to the cosmic referentiality of this view" (202).

The novel investigates both identity and existence. It highlights opposing points of view about absurdity in literature. Jacob Horner, the protagonist, faces difficulty and hardships in his life because of the problem of choice and decision. When he completes an oral examination of his Master's degree, he cannot decide where to go for the holiday; he is overcome by paralysis. Next, he meets the doctor who provides him with therapy sessions which help him to avoid complexity of making decisions or choices. The Doctor, then, prescribes mythotherapy which illustrates that essence is preceded by existence. As a result, it explains the freedom of people to choose and to change their lives, "combined with the ironic treatment of Sartre's view of freedom of choice" (Fokkema and Bretens 202). Patricia Waugh, however, refers to the novel's role playing which indicates the metafictional elements and asserts that:

Jacob Horner is a grammar teacher who lives his life on the principle of the generative possibilities of substitution and combination offered by 'mythotherapy', a form of compulsive role-playing. Another character, Joe Morgan, is a logician who obsessively categorizes experience according to the rules of pure logic. Between them they bring about the death of Joe's wife (Jacob's lover) through, in Jacob's case, an avoidance of real responsibility and, in Joe's, the inflexibility and inhumanity which is the result of distorting experience to fit predetermined categories. (117)

This quotation indicates that mythotherapy and the difficulty of choice, which Jacob Horner suffers from, can signify both absurdity and metafiction highlighting

the artificiality of inauthentic representation of fiction as Albert Camus goes to say about writers; they “see only the salient points of these lives without taking into account the details of corrosion. Thus [they] make these lives into works of art” (qtd. in Waugh118). Similarly, Neil Cornwell describes John Fowles’s *Mantissa* (1982) as:

[...] essentially a confrontation, supposedly taking place within his own brain, between a writer (one Miles Green) and a protean female character: muse doubling as protagonist [...] The ontological tables are turned several times [...] in keeping with Brian McHale’s thesis of an ontological dominant in postmodernism, rather than an epistemological equivalent in modernism [...] As the metafictional ploy is developed (O’Brien fashion), multiple references occur to the concept of absurdity.

(286)

Mantissa is a metafictional absurd which draws the reader’s attention to its fictionality and its artificiality. It is the most self-reflexive novel that examines creativity and the process of writing fiction. Besides, it represents a novelist who is suffering from amnesia. When he awakes in a hospital, he believes that a female doctor is his muse. By providing fictional dialogues about metanarratives and Old Greek literature, it ironically and playfully lays bare the act of writing. It incorporates a sense of absurdity, self-referentiality and playfulness within the walls of fiction by highlighting the inability of the contemporary narrative to imitate reality. Miles, for instance, states that, “[t]he reflective novel is sixty years dead, Erato. What do you think modernism was about? Let alone postmodernism. Even the dumbest students know it’s a *reflexive* medium now, not a reflective one” (qtd.in Salami 199). Moreover, he insists on portraying his view about serious fiction and claims that “[s]erious modern fiction has only one subject: the difficulty of writing serious modern fiction” (qtd.in Salami 199). Later, he explores this feature of being only fiction and states that it “has no business at all tampering with real life or reality” (qtd.in Salami 199).

Furthermore, the novel makes use of permutation which is a feature of postmodernism, incorporating recurring texts in narratives of many levels in order to discard the chronological order. In other words, it stresses its own permutation through imposing the fictional order upon reality. This results in absurdity and disorder. Thus, Fowles's novel dismisses the linearity of the conventional literature and breaks the rules. Miles, the protagonist, suffers from the writer's block and from lack of creativity while the character Erato acts as an inspiring muse. Yet, she refuses the way he represents her subjectivity and says, "All I do is parrot whatever lines you give me. They're ours. Not mine" (qtd. in Salami 204). She also rejects his power and asserts that "because it's so crudely repetitive one has to be its victim for only a few pages to guess how it will always work" (qtd. in Salami 204). Besides, she undermines the way he introduces her femininity and the way he portrays her physically as a whore who is trying to attract men, "[b]ut incomparably her greatest beauty and attraction is linguistic" (qtd. in Salami 204).

In other words, the writer imposes her way of exposing sexuality to serve the development of his work and this illustrates the power that the writer uses to dominate the characters. Violence also dominates the narrative which serves to highlight how absurd life is in the characters' views especially when it is related to sexuality to introduce fictionalisation, self-reflexivity and absurdity. Erato, however, resists control and says, "[Y]ou are always trying to turn me into something I'm not" (qtd. in Salami 204). The novel stresses the absurdity of human existence especially when there is use of repetition and meaningless dialogues which breaks the conventional order of the literary norms.

Furthermore, Vladimir Nabokov's *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (1969) portrays the tremendous efforts that reveal the authors situation and the world so as to compose their novel. Nabokov compares this struggle between the author and his literary work with the chess competition in that it raises a conflict not between the White and the Black but between the composer of the chess and the solver. For instance, his novel *Look at the Harlequins* (1974) is about a narrator who suffers from problems, named Vadim Vadimovich. This fictional narrator tends to write novels and poetry. The writer Vladimir creates a level of self-referentiality modelling his previous work. The novels which are written by Vadim parallel Nabokov's novels in many ways. For example, when Vadim refers to his first work, the reader can deduce that Nabokov is implying his first novel *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight* (1941), not to mention the similarities between Vladimir's *Lolita* (1958) and Vadim's *A Kingdom by the Sea*.

Moreover, Waugh states that "Vladimir Nabokov playfully introduces himself into his novels very often through anagrams of variations on his name (132). It is so obvious that Vadim refers to Vladimir. Thus, the writer projects and inserts himself in the text and this is a metafictional device used in some postmodernist narratives. This strategy allows Nabokov to theorise and dramatise his view about writing and literature.

The fictional narrator (Vadim) provides a summary to his narrative *The Dare* which is written by a fictional writer named Victor and which parodies Vladimir's *The Gift* (1936). Thus, the reader finds himself in front of three narrators. This illustration clarifies both referentiality and parody.

The other example is the novel of *Ada and Ardor* where Nabokov discusses the function of the narrator, the narratee and the narrative. Ada and Van are lovers who

discover that they are a brother and a sister, but they keep loving each other. A first reading of this novel may not reveal the metafictional aspects in the novel. In fact, it represents a crucial element in narrating as it uses the concept of two narrators as lovers. Throughout the novel, Nabokov leaves the reader in doubt about the identity of the narrator because of changing the roles of telling the story and then changing the points of view between Van and Ada.

For instance, when Van says, “Go on from here, Ada, please” (qtd. in Christensen 39), and Ada says, “now it’s really your turn, Van” (qtd. in Christensen 39), they act as narrators while they are also characters. This scene reveals the fictitious nature of the story. The reader can deduce that both the narrators and the characters are not real through the “cross - references between the narrators’ world at the moment of reminiscence and that of the characters” (Christensen 42). For instance, the description of Van when he was 14 smoking “post – coital cigarette” (Christensen 42) and when he was 90 years old with a “Cannabian cigarette” (Christensen 42) connects a narrator with a character in the same novel and “one realises that Ada and Van’s tender encounters are fiction at all” (Christensen 42).

Furthermore, they behave as one person though they are different people depending on “mutual correction of common memories” (Christensen 39), especially when Van comments that “if people remembered the same, they would not be different people. That’s how it went” (qtd. in Christensen 40), or when Ada states, “But we are not different!” (qtd. in Christensen 40). Thus, the combination of the two narrators results in the family chronicle while the novel turns its attention upon the art itself by wielding the viewpoint of

first person with third person of narration that emphasises the co-operation of “Vaniada” (Christensen 23).

Moreover, Ada represents science while Van represents art. Both narrators consider “reality and natural science [...] synonymous” (Christensen 40) in the chronicle. The interest of Ada in science portrays the concept of reality while the interest of Van in art represents fiction.

Besides, Nabokov presents the love story between Ada and Van as a “metaphor of the narrative function” (Christensen 42), where he correlates between “sexual and verbal communication- a characteristic most works of metafiction seem to share” by claiming that “communication constitutes the theme of the novel” (Christensen 42), and “the novelistic theme of written communication has now really got into its stride” (Christensen 42).

Furthermore, the linguistic games and playfulness were clearly drawn when Van was depicted at the age of 87 as impotent though “he experiences an unbelievable intellectual surge, [a] creative explosion” (Christensen 43). This scene outlines and delineates that “sexual activity has been replaced by mental activity and expresses symbolically the creation of art” (Christensen 43). Thus, both role playing and sexual activities are metafictional devices in Nabokov’s novel.

In addition, the paradoxical incorporation of fiction and reality can be read in works by other authors such as the American writer, Joseph Heller, who could plainly introduce the metafictional devices and the absurdist themes in his novel *Catch-22* (1961). In this light, Patricia Waugh, in her examination of the American tendency towards fiction and metafiction in the sixties, reinforces two substantial factors. The first one is “the earlier sensitivity of American fiction to the concept of reality as a construct” (115).

The second factor that led to the growth of these genres is “the emergence of a much more influential youth ‘counter-culture’, with an attendant growth in political and psychological awareness about issues such as race, war, gender and technology” (Waugh 115). Waugh also asserts that the fictional legacy was characterised by “absurdism and black humour” (116). As a result, the American writers have tended to represent “the anonymous, frenetic and mechanized society they see around them with fiction that is similarly depersonalized, hyperactive and over- or undersystematized” (Waugh 116).

Similarly, Heller’s *Catch-22* represents a sense of absurdity and blends it with metafiction which “is applied to this kind of novel, [in the late twentieth century], suggesting a kind of fiction that does not pretend to portray reality and continually calls attention to its fictive nature.”¹ It is nonetheless different from the conventional war novels in “its outrageous humor, much of it black and having to do with death and injury.” ²

Actually, the novel is about a young airman called Yossarian who pretends to be mad as well as sick in order not to participate in the war. It introduces an arrangement of characters which have disparate dysfunctional relationships with the military bureaucracy.

The novel offers “an outworn form” (Harris 50) of the conventional stream- of-consciousness ³ novels, such as William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), which involute time. Such novels dismiss the significance of the chronological

¹ Laurence W. Mazzeno, "Catch-22 - Critical Evaluation." Critical Survey of Literature for Students Ed. eNotes.com, Inc. 2010 eNotes.com. <http://www.enotes.com/topics/catch22/critical-essays/critical-evaluation>. Accessed 01 January, 2017.

² Laurence W. Mazzeno, "Catch-22 - Critical Evaluation."

³ Stream of consciousness is “the continuous flow of sense- perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and memories in the human mind; or a literary method of representing such a blending of mental processes in fictional characters , usually in an unpunctuated or disjointed form of [interior monologue]” (Baldick 244).

order but they do not break it. In other words, they do not disregard “the existence of it” (Harris 34). Heller in *Catch-22*, then, relinquishes “the novelistic conventions of the past altogether” (Harris 50). He, also, uses “prose style containing juxtaposed words, phrases, and clauses that will express contradictory ideas” (Harris 46). This use indicates chaos and instability in fiction and offers a commentary on organised style of the conventional novels.

Moreover, it indicates “a radical protest against absurdity” (Harris 33). Both his prose and structure assert the “novel’s theme of absurdity [and] create their own dimension of absurdity techniques” (Harris 34). In doing so, the writer introduces “a new pattern of literary expression to the American sixties” (Harris 34). Unlike the writers John Barth, Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut who often “focus upon the absurdities inherent in modern mass society” (Harris 34), Heller is a radical protest novelist. Actually, the latter do not believe in the reformation of society. Accordingly, Barth asserts that “[his] argument is with the facts of life, not the conditions of it” (Harris 34).

Besides, Yossarian chooses escape and “flight shortly after Milo’s Enterprises, representative in the novel of the industrial bureaucracy” (Harris 37). This scene indicates that he is escaping “not only from the industrial bureaucracy but from the absurdity it embodies” (Harris 37).

Hence, *Catch-22*, distinctly, integrates Heller’s thought in a genre of literature which best describes his own conception of absurdity. This betokens the fact that the postmodernists often embrace all the chaotic as well as irrational elements that are based on the literature of despair and disillusionment.

CONCLUSION

When setting postmodernist features and absurdity side by side, one can deduce that the postmodernist writers make use of absurdist elements in order to examine the exhausted literature and also to offer the new ways of commenting on the process of writing that John Barth has explored. Actually, both Ihab Hassan and John Barth reinforce the need of writers for using previous works. Besides, their insights illustrate and highlight the shift from silence to exhaustion to imitation of another imitation. In other words, John Barth supplies readers another view and impression of the possibility to create and invent new production of art without rejecting old literature. The metafictional novel, then, reveals the potentials of the postmodernist writer to provide an input on the conventional rules of literature by employing literary elements such as form and style, but at the same time it illustrates the struggle of man with the absurdity of life.

Chapter Two

*The Metafictional Absurd:
Parody, Irony and Playfulness*

INTRODUCTION

There are many possible contributing factors to postmodernist writers' use of metafictional devices that, paradoxically and playfully, manifest the process of writing fiction. This chapter demonstrates and examines the use of parody and irony of form in Martin Amis's novel as it reinforces the imitation of genre and provides comments on writing literature. It also highlights the idea that fiction is the subject matter and a topic of interest to Amis. Though the novel examines violence, loss and alienation as important elements of absurdity, the main focus is on the fictionality and artificiality of fiction. In addition, the chapter explores how the death of love is an allusion to the conventional rules of the love story. Furthermore, this chapter juxtaposes the apocalyptic literature, as a genre of the prophetic writing, and the dystopian features in order to put together the absurdist tools and the metafictional devices. This juxtaposition results in manifesting the features of the postmodernist apocalyptic and dystopian fiction.

II-1- The Postmodernist Parody: Making the Difference

II-1-1- A Postmodernist title and the setting of *London Fields*

The title's first impression indicates that the novel is a pure irony or satire of London. Actually, London is urban but the fields are not. Amis reinforces this ironic indication in the title when Samson Young, an unsuccessful writer, visits London and describes it with no fields. Sam realises that "this is London; and there are no fields. Only fields of operation and observation, only fields of electromagnetic attraction and repulsion, only fields of hatred and coercion" (Amis 82). It is oxymoronic.¹ Of course, this use of opposites serves the writer's parodic and the ironic clues to impose the metafictional elements that lay bare the fictionality of the novel.

The title, then, suggests the paradox as it puts rural or pastoral land: London Fields, within an urban and modern setting: Notting Hill. The paradox, which Amis creates by offering disparate descriptions of London's places, points out the link between reality and fiction. It also poses questions about the creation of art through illuminating the faithful representation of reality by the realists. The paradox is inherent in the creation of the imagined city of London; thus, it sheds light on the struggle of the description between the location of the imagined fictional city of Martin Amis and that of the real city in Britain. It signifies that literary features cannot fit the features in life.

Actually, London Fields is a district and a park which is located in the Queensbridge Ward in Hackney, north-east London. Originally, the park is an ancient land and represents the lungs of central Hackney as it links several important places for people like a railway, a pub, and a school. The name 'London Fields' was first recorded

¹ Oxymoron is "a figure of speech that combines two usually contradictory terms in a compressed paradox, as in the word *bittersweet* or the phrase *living death*" (Baldick 179).

in 1540.¹ It is also a commonable land; the route ran from Hackney Grove was a main place for marketers to take products from Hackney farms and nurseries to the city, London.

Eventually, London has drawn the attention of writers in past and present times, as a source of inspiration.² Paradoxically, the novel is set in an area in west London, Notting Hill. The title is itself a paradox as it entirely expresses metafictional elements.

Peter Kemp comments on the title *London Fields* as a “pastoral title savagely inappropriate to its inner-city setting, [which] vibrates, like all Amis’s work, with the force fields of sinister, destructive energies.”³ The reader will come across the description of London locations which differ from the location of London Fields in reality. Thus, the title does not fit the setting of the novel and the setting of the novel does not fit locations in Britain. It is the ambiguity, playfulness that the novel expresses, and also the puzzle that the reader should solve. Besides, it intimates the ironic treatment that Amis intends the reader to realise. It represents “for the narrator not a place but an ahistorical, prelapsarian time of innocence when he, if not all London, lived ‘outside history’” (Childs 48). Accordingly, Amis reinforces this idea when he differentiates and distinguishes between two kinds of titles in his introductory note stating that: “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” (Amis, the Note). It becomes tangible to the reader as he reads the book that Amis went for the latter option, “*London Fields* is the second kind of title. So let’s call it *London Fields*” (Amis, the Note). Like *London Fields*

¹ See McShane, especially pages 9 and 10, for an insightful illustration.

² London is the setting of novels such as, Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Canterbury Tales* (late 14th century), Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, (1859) and Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925).

³ See the introduction of *London Fields* written by John Sutherland, par.6 (<http://www.randomhouse.com>).

exist in real London, the fictional London fields are “present all along [...] on every page” (Amis, the Note) of the novel.

In addition, Amis clarifies and illustrates the alternatives that suggested themselves. Actually, these suggestions indicate parody, the apocalyptic¹ setting of the novel and the dystopian² world in Amis’s fictional London. In the introductory note, he states:

For a while I toyed with *Time's Arrow*. Then I thought *Millennium* would be wonderfully bold (a common belief: *everything* is called *Millennium* just now). I even flirted, late at night, with *The Death of Love*. In the end the most serious contender was *The Murdereee*, which seemed both sinister and deeply catchy. And I wavered and compromised with things like *London Fields*, or *The Murdereee: Final Version* . . . [Amis’s ellipsis]

(Amis, the Note)

The first title, *Time’s Arrow*, indicates that the novel is an apocalyptic feature of time. The novel wrestles with ‘time’ as a theme by demonstrating the complexity in the depiction of the novel’s atmosphere. Since the novel was to be titled *Time’s Arrow*, it is a reference to the apocalyptic vision of which time fluxes. Moreover, it betokens and denotes a passage in Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969) in which time runs backwards and it “is reversed--the Dresden fire-bombing sequence.”³ In this passage, the character Billy Pilgrim is watching a backwards-run film of the American planes digging up some bombs from Dresden and repairing the destroyed city, before the bombs are sent back to a factory. As far as *London Fields* is concerned, Amis acknowledges this inspiration and asserts, “It was all about *time*. Time was everywhere present” (Amis 109). Also, Nicola Six reveals to the reader from the beginning what will happen because she knows when and how she dies

¹ Apocalyptic is “revealing the secrets of the future through prophecy; or having the character of an apocalypse or world consuming holocaust. Apocalyptic writing is usually concerned with the coming end of the world, seen in terms of a visionary scheme of history as in Yeats’s poem “The Second Coming” (Baldick 16).

² Dystopia is “a modern term invented as the opposite of UTOPIA [the perfect place], and applied to any alarmingly unpleasant imaginary world, usually of the projected future” (Baldick 74).

³ See Keulks, Gavin. “interviews.” www.martinamisweb.com.

undermining the conventional norms of the detective story. This is both an apocalyptic and ironic allusion which the introductory note points out.

In addition, the use of the title *Millennium* as a previous suggestion to the chosen title is an allusion to refer to 1999 where the novel is set, as in Germany where the novel is retitled *1999*.¹ Though, it can point out any other period with similar circumstances that are portrayed by the author. It also betokens that the novel is apocalyptic, but it differs from the other apocalyptic postmodernist works in that it is “a postmodernist apocalyptic take on the millennium’s finale. Suffused with death and war, attended by constant rain and images of ecological disaster” (Childs 48). It is also a “mournful lament for the future dead it envisages and for the long-lost fields of London” (Childs 48).

Besides, the novel, at one stage, was to be called *The Death of Love* which is introduced and reinforced in the book, “Perhaps love was dying, was already dead. One more catastrophe” (Amis 84). Again on the tennis court “Dink says nothing instead of love. Fifteen nothing. Nothing-thirty. Even on the tennis court love has gone; even on the tennis court love has been replaced by nothing” (Amis, 120). Hence, the death of love acts as an indication of “late twentieth-century cynicism and selfishness [and] the threat of extinction” (Childs 51). Furthermore, the title of the story is extremely important as it creates anticipation and expectation and gives a clue to the reader, enabling him to understand an underlying idea of the book in a particular way.

¹ See the introduction of *London Fields*, written by John Sutherland, par. 1 (<http://www.randomhouse.com>).

II-1-2-The Multiplicity of Genres and Double-Relation Characters

Amis's works often outline the irony of form and employ parody which parodies the idea of parody itself. He uses them in order to deform the earlier narrative modes or to comment on genres because "[h]is use of irony compels a reader in reversing events and the narrator's interpretation of them" (Finney 57). In this sense, both parody and irony serve to highlight how postmodernism deconstructs and challenges concepts like author and authority. They also help to understand the (self) deconstructing text in addition to the discussion of the novelistic elements or frames. Irony and parody are closely related and used interchangeably.

The modernists, however, were also ironic and playful; but irony, parody and playfulness have become crucial aspects for the postmodernists. For instance, their use of the multiplicity and mixture of genres is an example of deforming, parodying and ironising the old conventions in literature. The postmodernist novel celebrates the multiple layers of narration as well as the multiple genres where the writer starts playing games with the reader by introducing this variety.¹

Putting it more simply, both parody and irony draw the reader's attention to the powers or the limits of novel's representation by using creative construction and critical deconstruction. Thus, they are self-reflexive techniques. On the one hand, they refer to some genres and styles in literature such as a romance and a detective story in order to give a critique of them; on the other hand, they point out and provide a comparison between the literature's writing process in the traditional and the contemporary novel.

¹ See Fokkema and Bretens, especially pages 90 and 91.

Waugh claims that “[c]ontemporary metafictional writing is both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional” (7). Parody and irony, then, provide an alternative world which is playful and artistic while offers a reconsideration of both reality and history. By doing so, the readers become fully aware of the presentation’s process, and “[t]his is precisely what parody does,” it takes “as its starting point a previous work or genre,” and then “it inserts a metaphoric version of this into the ongoing (metonymic) literary tradition. This dislocates both past and present texts: the rearrangement of the original text or genre reveals the potential rearrangements of the present one” (Waugh 69).

Catherine Bernard comes to a similar conclusion about Amis’s novels, in addition to *London fields*, and asserts that if these metafictional novels “question and foreground the way we make sense of the world, they also [...] reaffirm the necessity for fiction to shoulder reality” (qtd. in Finney 119). These novels are “a reworking of the mimetic tradition of fiction” (Finney 119).

For example, in his depiction of the double relations, Amis portrays the character as both controlled and controller, namely Nixon with the three males. Richard Todd claims that “many, possibly all, of these double relations in Amis’s fiction are metafictional in nature, one or more characters attempts explicitly to control the fate of other characters, or allow themselves to be so controlled” (qtd . in Finney 102). This illustrates the significance of Amis’s choice of double relation in such a murder and love story. It can be manipulated to serve as a whodunit, a thriller and a romance. It also reveals the nature of writing fiction by an author and his relation to his characters. For instance, Sam is both a murderer

and a detective. These two opposite roles cannot fit one character. Thus, the use of double relation indicates the postmodernist use of parody of form and genre.

Moreover, the readers of *London Fields* become familiar with the name of the killer from the very beginning of the story and they are told, in advance, that the victim willingly participates in the events of the crime. Unambiguously, this strategy is a distortion and twist of the conventional norms of the murder story where the victim is unaware of his destiny and is escaping from anything that threatens his life. On the contrary, Nicola is anxiously looking for her murderer throughout the novel. Accordingly, Finney claims that *London Fields*, “as mock-detective [story], [tends] to highlight certain mimetic realistic principles in order to subvert them from within” (119).

The multiplicity of genres in *London Fields* stems from the fact that it is “a murder story... a love story...” (Amis 1), and a mystery. To put it more simply, the book starts as a detective story, slips into a love story and thriller, then it ends as a horror story. It is “original, too, in its way. Not a whodunit. More a whydoit” (Amis 2), since the whodunit represents the classical detective mystery where there is crime and investigation; this novel “opens as a perverted murder mystery,” and “ends rather as a ‘why-dunnit’ than a ‘who-donnit’” (qtd. in Finney). Compared to a conventional and traditional whodunit, which follows a specific pattern where there is a victim, a killer and a detective, Amis’s novel disregards this pattern and imitates the postmodernist detective story such as Jorge Louis Borges’s *Death and the Compass* (1942) where he “uses an inversion of the detective story to expose the absurdity of faith in human reason in his story” (Waugh 84). In such postmodernist detective fiction, the detective is himself the killer with an ambiguous role. Sam, then, is a narrator, a detective and a killer. It is an analogy to investigate the role of

the author making use of double relation, which is a metafictional device. Unfortunately, he fails as a detective and as a killer like “[he] failed in art and love” (Amis 149). In addition to that, it is a ‘whydunit’ since it arouses the curiosity of the reader to look for the murderer’s identity while it draws his attention to the future of events, relying on past expectations and the prophetic skills of Nicola, which offer the reader with the time as well as the way she is going to be killed. She “always knew what was going to happen next” (Amis 10), and knows that she will die “some minutes after midnight on her thirty-fifth birthday” (Amis 11).

Besides, the novel combines fun and complexity as it depicts comical scenes, while at times the reader finds himself lost within the puzzles and the labyrinth of the narrative. On the one hand, it combines the fictional elements and games playing as pun; on the other hand, it involves the reader in a serious way as Amis states, “ Irony and indirection and humour are still the only things you have to work with” (qtd . in Finney 57).

The use of oxymoron serves as a means to blur the boundaries between reality and fiction, and to lay bare the artificiality of the novel, starting from the words used as a title, to the characters’ names, to some expressions that are composed of opposites. The title of *London Fields* signifies London with no fields. Besides, after the introductory opening, Amis captures the reader’s attention to an important metafictional device, blurring the boundary between reality and fiction by using oxymoron. When the narrator says, “This is a true story but I can’t believe it’s really happening” (Amis 1), he uses the phrase “true story”, which is oxymoronic since it gets together and converges the adjective ‘true’ and the noun ‘story’. It is a paradox that provides opportunities to examine and highlight the narrative truth’s limits.

Furthermore, Amis uses oxymoron to create the opposites in characters' names. Keith Talent, for instance, “was a very bad guy” (Amis 2), and “he just didn't have the talent” (Amis 3). Besides, *London Fields* is put out in twenty-four chapters which are supposed to include linear time and order, yet there is none. Samson Young, also is not young, but acts the role of unsuccessful narrator who is dying of terminal disease.

What is more, the characters play a significant role in intimating the playfulness and games that the events of the novel highlight. It also raises questions whether imitating property can be considered as theft or something else; it scrutinises the distinction between parody and plagiarism. On the one hand, Sam is writing his story by imitating the diaries of Nicola, from Clinch's fiction and from Keith's documents. Sam asserts, “All three characters have given me something they've written. Keith's brochure, Nicola's diaries, Guy's fiction” (Amis 27). He also explains how these sources provide him with different views, “Things written for different reasons: self-aggrandize-ment, self communion, self-expression. One offered freely, one abandoned to chance, one coaxingly procured” (Amis 27). On the other hand, Mark Asprey publishes the work, adds the diaries of Sam and neglects his last desire to destroy the manuscript. For instance, in his letter to Kim that indicates that he is a victim, Sam states, “I feel seamless and insubstantial, like a creation. As if someone made me up, for money. And I don't care” (Amis 297). Besides, in his letter to Mark Asprey, he points out, “You didn't set me up. Did you?” (Amis 297).

This imitation of another imitation indicates Barth's illustration of the postmodernist use of previous works. In his view, the postmodernist writer imitates the exhausted literary styles, forms and genres; he can produce a literary work. It also points out chaos as well as fragmentation that result from the use of various pieces in the narrative.

Moreover, Nicola has the ability to predict the future and “she always knew what was going to happen next” (Amis 10). The postmodernist writers often include science fiction¹ or some supernatural abilities to their characters in order to outline the multiplicity of genres as a parody of the typical novels or conventional literature. Nicola’s prediction of the future indicates the use of imaginary social and environmental changes and portrays life in different period of time.

Furthermore, Sam points out that Marmaduke, the only child of Guy and Hope, resembles Keith in his childhood and asserts that he is like him. Similarly, Kim, the daughter of Keith, can be referred to Nicola because of mentioning the word ‘Enola’: “‘Enlah,’ said the baby. ‘Enlah,’ said Kim. ‘Enlah.’” (Amis 66); and again, he says: “Psycho hot on her heels. ‘Enlah . . . Enlah . . . Enlah.’” (Amis 105). Enlah, or Enola, presents a fictional character in Nicola’s life; it turns over the childhood of Nicola. The novel, then, represents Kim and Marmaduke as a type the incarnation of both Nicola and Keith. It demonstrates another feature of irony or parody which blurs the boundaries between high and low art and highlights the multiplicity of genres.

Hence, the novel employs the science- fiction features where the character’s traits may fit one another in different ages. Similarly, Childs depicts Diedrick’s view of Amis’s use of these characteristics asserting that “all of Amis’s fiction tends to undercut distinctions between “high” and popular literature, which is what much science fiction does” (131). What is critical in Amis’s *London Fields* and makes it so immensely *fun and gripping*, is that he borrows the conventions of science fiction without allowing them to take over plot or characters.

¹ Science fiction is “a popular modern branch of prose fiction that explores the probable consequences of some improbable transformation of the basic conditions of human (or intelligent non-human) existence [and] a form of [fantasy] or [romance] that often draws upon earlier kinds of [utopian] and [apocalyptic] writing” (Baldick 230).

II-1-3-Mingling Dystopia, Apocalypse and History

The postmodernist writers who deal with historical, dystopian or apocalyptic events often leave the reader with an issue of crucial importance that there is no way to completely discard the past, since it is a vital part that constitutes and shapes the present and the future. Thus, people need to understand history and the past in order to realise the changes that happen in the contemporary era. This stems from the fact that they make use of the traditional styles and forms so as to examine the differences between the traditional contemporary norms of literature.

Martin Amis, then, focuses on historical background and apocalyptic fictional elements in order to realise the reversal in genre, to deploy the literary conventions or to comment on the act of writing literature. He is “thus more interested in good and bad writing than in literature that attempts to delineate the good and bad” (Childs 36). He adopts an approach similar to the comment of Nabokov about Gustave Flaubert in which he states that “[t]he subject may be crude and repulsive. Its expression is artistically modulated and balanced. This is style. This is art. This is the only thing that really matters in books” (Childs 36). Waugh, also, says that “[a]ll metafiction ‘plays’ with the form of the novel, but not all playfulness in fiction is of the metafictional variety” (43). In other words, Amis’s subject matter is the mode of representation itself since irony of form relies on the alteration of conventional norms. Thus, the traditional forms which are regulated by formal rules are deformed.

Moreover, in her examination of Vonnegut’s novels, Patricia Waugh asserts that they “suggest that the construction of alternative worlds should not be an activity that ignores the events and logic of the historical world but should provide an unfamiliar

perspective on that world” (129). She also deduces that “if novels cannot prevent disasters like Dresden, they can at least change people’s attitudes to them” (129). Similarly, *London Fields* does not completely neglect history and past but highlights how they shape the present. Besides, it illustrates how modernity and civilisation led London to its self-destruction, which results in London with no fields.

What is needed to be highlighted here is that the novel incorporates history, apocalyptic elements in addition to its dystopian depiction which is likely to follow the apocalyptic events. Actually, pinning down the boundary between apocalyptic narrative and the dystopian novel is a hard task to do. The main focus of dystopian fiction is on the frightening and macabre depiction of an imaginary world which is different from the one where people live, while the focus of the apocalyptic novel is on the representation of the end of the world and the impact of disasters or the catastrophes. Thus, a dystopian society can occur without an apocalypse.

Yet, Amis’s novel employs elements of both of them: it depicts those ruins of the terrifying and dreadful threats in the millennium leading to the destruction of London. As far as parody and irony are concerned, the novel parodies and ironises the historical events and at the same time parodies the conventional apocalyptic and realistic narratives. The need for making sense of the catastrophic world in which people live may arouse a critical response on the part of the writer; the interest of the traditional or conventional apocalyptic fiction is that it highlights the impossibility to repair the ruined world. This postmodernist apocalyptic novel makes use of the conventional apocalyptic or dystopian narrative and serves as a means to provide social criticism.

II-1- 4- The Apocalyptic features of *London Fields*

Diedrick states that this novel is “an unstable mixture of millennial murder mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad, and domestic farce” (119). Unlike the other apocalyptic novels, this novel concerns the end of the millennium. Childs asserts that *London Fields* is “a state -of-the-nation novel, a murder mystery, an anti-love story, and a satire,” he adds, “a postmodernist apocalyptic take on the millennium’s finale” (48). This apocalyptic novel has come to be understood in terms of writing about the end of the century since it is set in future, in 1999, referring to 2000.

Moreover, Elizabeth Rosen, in her book *Apocalyptic Transformation: Apocalypse and the Postmodern Imagination* (2008), clarifies the differences between the traditional and postmodernist narratives of apocalypse and says that “[t]he traditional story of apocalypse is fundamentally one in which God is the central actor and judgment the main action. The result of the judgment is the destruction of the old world on the one hand, and creation of a revitalized new world on the other” (xxii). On the contrary, Amis’s postmodernist novel completely undermines God’s supreme authority. Rosen also tackles the underlying challenges that the postmodernist writer faces when imitating literature of apocalypse. She proclaims that the focus of the traditional apocalyptic story is on religious and mythic references. Since secular writers deal with such an issue, she then wonders what the result is when the story is removed from its theological setting. Nonetheless, she provides an illustration to elucidate the postmodernist apocalyptic paradigm arguing that:

Godlike qualities may be relocated in human figure, one who possesses the power to give or take life, or who seems to be omnipotent or omniscient in some other way. In other cases, the alternative deity figure can take the form of a specific apotheosized object, idea, or even ideology. (Rosen xxii)

In this sense, the narrator, Sam, represents the simile of author and God as shown by postmodernist literature to indicate the loss of authority. Moreover, Nicola ‘was

the miracle' (9) and she is compared to Virgin Mary. She does not pray in church. She imagines herself sleeping with God and manipulates Him as she does with other characters. She also dreams of God's desire to marry her. This indicates the corrupt figure of messiah that represents the postmodernist vision.¹ Furthermore, in her analysis of the postmodernist adaptations of traditional apocalypse and translating it into secular terms, Rosen distinguishes between three areas of the original apocalyptic paradigm. The first one is related to the death of God. She argues that "Nietzsche's dictum that God is dead is perhaps not taken as the rule in postmodern versions, but he may no longer be the perfect entity of the biblical version" (xxii).

The novel, also, "describes a rain-soaked London under threat of a global disaster" (Childs 38). It is characterised by a life under the nuclear threats shadow in addition to some scenes that offer a life's foretaste of nuclear apocalypse. What is more, the novel points out that the failure of a complete destruction and of the global disaster "that never actually occurs" (Childs 38). It is actually an allusion to the failure of the apocalyptic fiction to emphasise and tighten the absurdity of life and corruption in the contemporary world. Furthermore, Rosen explains how postmodernist apocalyptic narrative functions in terms of metafiction. She depicts Robert Coover's works as he is a practitioner of metafiction and illustrates how he makes use of apocalypse as metafiction.

She also manifests how metafictionists are interested in questioning the "role of the writer and the need for new kind of stories and forms" (Rosen 139). Accordingly, Coover believes that apocalypse is "one of the guiding fictions of our culture, a rich way of

¹ See, for instance, Rosen's depiction of Doctor Manhattan, a fictional character created by Alan Moore with Dave Gibbons. Rosen describes Dr. Manhattan as a "god for postmodern age [...who] can be persuaded, a god who changes his mind" (32).

transmuting ideas of disaster and fear of disaster into more meaningful fictions about an ordained structure and a teleologically driven End” (qtd. in Rosen 125).

In Amis’s novel, the title of *London Fields* appears perfect on the surface, yet bad underneath. London is depicted as a violent, scary, dangerous and dark place where people are anxious and careful of being cheated or stolen in the streets. Keith Talent is introduced as a professional cheat. In this fictional London, crime dominates the scene and nearly everyone is ready to cheat. Mark Asprey, the successful writer, cheats when he publishes Sam’s work. In addition to that, “burgling, when viewed in Darwinian terms, was clearly approaching a crisis,” and “[b]urglars were finding that almost everywhere had been burgled” (Amis 157). Even worse, “[b]urglars were being burgled by fellow burglars, and were doing the same thing” (Amis 157).

The apocalyptic setting of the novel, then, is leading the way to explosive end through illustrating the weather, which is strangely behaving, the nuclear devastation and the ecological disasters at the time of “the full eclipse” (Amis 211) of the sun over London. The incorporation of these threats is called “the Crisis” (Amis 41). For instance, the use of some real names such as ‘Enola Gay’, ‘Little Boy’ and ‘El Niño’ as characters or representing the ‘Greenhouse impact’ provide an insight to ‘the Crisis’ and refer to the ecological issues and nuclear threats. When Keith talks to Lady Barnaby about the weather, they refer to El Niño, an annual weak warm ocean current. It ran southwards along the coast of Peru and Ecuador. They say:

'It seems silly to be going away in this weather.'

'Greenhouse,' said Keith dismissively. 'El Niño innit. Tomorrow just be pissing down.'

(Amis 65)

Keith's description of the weather shows ironically how the weather looks like in London. It gets worse and worse. Thus, the narrator asserts, "Her bones knew the old English weather; whereas Keith was accustomed to a more versatile sky" (Amis 65). Lady Barnaby is uncomfortable with the weather. The novel illustrates the apocalyptic features through the regular raining, which "didn't do in England, not regularly, not any longer. It did that now in places like California and Morocco" (Amis 65).

Besides, the winds "tear through the city, they tear through the island, as if softening it up for an exponentially greater violence," killing in a day "nineteen people, and thirty-three million trees" (Amis 28). In addition, the novel introduces forests on fire, which can result in the loss of the green lands. The novel also shows the threats that occur because of the astronomical bodies' collision with the Earth like the "exploding star that drenched the globe in cosmic rays. A meteorite shower that kicked up a coating of dust" (Amis 189).

Besides, the novel depicts the protagonist Nicola in her childhood with "a little friend called Enola Gay" (Amis 42). The novel depicts this mysterious character as the closest person to Nicola when she was a little girl because she "shared in all Nicola's schemes and feints, her tantrums and hunger-strikes, in all her domestic terrorism. She too had the knack or gift of always knowing how things would unfold" (Amis 42). At first glance, the reader may expect a description that manipulates him to believe that Enola is a real person in Nicola's life. Surprisingly, another description is added to her that she "wasn't real. Enola came from inside the head of Nicola Six. Nicola was an only child and knew she always would be" (Amis 10).

In other words, she “didn't exist. Nicola invented her” (Amis 42). Moreover, Enola gives birth to “a terrible child, a little boy called Little Boy” (Amis 42). When Guy picks up *The Light of Many Suns* and reaches page forty-six, he discovers a different explanation to these fictional characters. He realises that “‘Enola Gay’ was the plane that flew the mission to Hiroshima. The pilot named the aircraft after his mother. He was once her little boy. But Little Boy was the name of the atom bomb. It killed 50,000 people in 120 seconds” (Amis 283-284). This description shows how awful the moment is, and how the individual’s life has become absurd from the moment this Little Boy was used to kill this great number of people in few seconds. The novel is so engaged in employing the historical events to illustrate the major themes ironically.

In other words, this scene indicates and introduces the reader to the historical background that Amis relies on in his ironic treatment. The name itself is paradoxically chosen where the words ‘little’ and ‘boy’ signify that the name does not always refer to the effect. Such Little Boy caused destruction of a whole city in short time. Of course, the description of these terms creates a sense of absurdity through highlighting trauma and sudden death. Consequently, Nicola can represent death and threats as she “is a heavy symbolic cargo in *London Fields* –a metaphor appropriate to her association with the B-52 bomber” (Diedrick126).

In other words, the destruction of Hiroshima is deeply rooted in the collective consciousness and has not yet dissipated. It has created a sense of trauma and anxiety. This anxiety, however, stems from the fact that people are afraid of the re-occurrence of another destroying event similar to the two World Wars as a challenge of the same way in

the contemporary world, and the fact that there is still recrudescence and diffusion of nuclear powers.

Accordingly, in his view of apocalypse, Coover states that “since whole peoples are periodically wiped out on the planet, there is always somewhere, someone who is experiencing apocalypse, and that in nuclear and technological age, fear of this sort of things isn’t likely to go away” (qtd. in Rosen 125). Thus, this frightening nightmare is illustrated through recalling the names of Enola and Little Boy. This terrifying and dreadful atomic explosion is not likely to disappear and as it exists in the memory of Nicola, the incident is still in the memory of individuals.

Besides, Rosen claims that “[a]pocalyptic writing is a particular offshoot of prophecy” (66). The significant point that distinguishes them is that “[w]hile all apocalyptists are prophets, not all prophets are apocalyptists” (Rosen 66). On the one hand, in the traditional apocalypse, the prophet of God rebukes and admonishes the community as a result of the misbehaviour and inappropriate manners. He is, then, characterised by his future prediction. On the other hand, God has the supreme authority to change or fix plans which can destroy the world and “bring human history to an end” (Rosen 66). Accordingly, the apocalyptists assert that people can only admit God’s decision; “all they can do is to endure it” (Rosen 66).

Paradoxically, in postmodernist representations of the apocalyptic narratives, apocalyptists are different since they announce their communities about the apocalyptic disaster which will happen in the future and they know that something is coming. Hence, Rosen argues that the true apocalyptist “yearns for the end, knowing that New Jerusalem awaits the faithful after the last judgment. This one has a sense of dissatisfaction and

frustration that is born of his recognition that the promised New Jerusalem meant to follow the end has slipped away” (161).

Nicola, then, represents the postmodernist apocalyptic prophet because of her abilities to predict the future; she yearns for the end and has “a sense of dissatisfaction and frustration that is born of [her] recognition that the promised New Heaven has slipped away” (Rosen 161).

At the age of four, she watches on TV the alerts and cautions of ruin and destruction. The TV news presents the threats of London’s catastrophic event and Nicola knew that this would happen as a nuclear explosion. Hence, she outlines the postmodernist prophetic vision and declares the warnings

II-1-5-Edging Apocalypse of Time in *London Fields*

In her book, Rosen provides a comprehensive representation of the complexities of time in the study of apocalypse. She underlines these complexities by illustrating the distinguishing features between a traditional apocalyptic story and a postmodernist narrative. She states that “[t]he traditional apocalypse is based on a linear notion of time and is a story about the end of history (xxiv), and then she argues that “[w]hat we find in the postmodern versions of apocalypse, however, is that the story about the End of Time becomes instead a story about the end of one time. This marks a return to a view of time which is cyclical rather than linear” (xxiv). Accordingly, Amis’s novel dismisses the conventional linear time, negates the conceivability of a better future and expresses a negative view of the present. Time, then, serves as a means to treat the final events as imminent. This view of time is coupled with an expectation of an apocalyptic scenario, which is shaped by the Crisis.

Rosen also claims that this postmodern version “marks a movement away from the Judeo-Christian notion of linear time with a beginning, middle, and end” (xxiv). This shift, then, indicates “how rigid delineations are abandoned in favor of a more flexible interpretation: endings become beginnings and vice versa. Moreover, *absolute* beginnings and endings disappear” (Rosen xxiv). Seemingly falling into this category, there are a bunch of apocalyptic features of time which often crop up in Amis’s postmodernist novel.

The pub, for instance, is one of the features that elaborate the use of time as an integral part in that engaging story and in English literature as a whole. The complexities of time are depicted and epitomised by representing the time of the pub since it has an early door and a closing time. In other words, it has a beginning and an end. Time in *London Fields* does not advance in a straight line but it is turning cyclically

creating the same events. Likewise, the novel keeps returning around the 'pub moment' in which the narrator says, "While the scene developed I melted, as they say, into the background. Of course I had no idea what was taking shape in front of me. No idea? Well, an inkling, maybe. This moment in the public house, this pub moment, I'm going to have to keep on coming back to it" (Amis 15). What is more, Sam does not stop his return to 'the pub moment'. This can refer to the ancient apocalyptic myth of Nietzsche about the 'eternal return' (Rosen xxxii) or Camus's representation of the Greek Myth of Sisyphus. The 'pub moment' also signifies the moment to which London keeps returning. Though the pub has an end and a beginning, it contrives to be eternally open. Hence, the pub time, in particular reflects one of the complexities of time in such an apocalyptic novel where time is both infinite and finite.

Besides, time is vital in Nicola's life because she knows the time of her death. She goes in search of her killer. Moreover, she "was as regular as time itself. Women are clocks, after all. They are timekeepers - keepers of the time" (Amis 130). Time is cyclical because the story of Nicola starts from the end as she is aware of everything that may happen; and the reader feels puzzled and tries to distinguish between the end and the beginning until they finish reading to discover that there is no difference between the time of death that Nicola announces and the crime. The novel, also, portrays the desire of the narrator to live in old London by recalling all the memories of childhood. He states:

I must go to London Fields, before it's too late. If I shut my eyes or even if I keep them open I can see the parkland and the sloped bank of the railway line. The foliage is tropical and innocuous; the sky is crystalline and innocuous. In fact the entire vista has a kiddie-book feel. There in his van putts Postman Pat: Postman Pat and his black-and-white cat. It is all outside history. Vicars, spinsters, parkies, gardeners, widows so old, so longwidowed, that they have reverted to a state of virginity. The only hard evidence of sex is the children - and, in the distance (and not so hard), soft hills in the shape of breasts. (Amis 205)

Accordingly, this is not the depiction of London as Sam used to dream of. Sam is introducing the past while showing a sense of repentance and sorrow about the changes that the alteration and fluctuation which, he believes, ruined the contemporary life in Amis's fictional world. In other words, he compares two different eras and underlines the dreadfulness of nuclear disaster. Thematising time can be a rich way of diverting and handing over ideas of fear and threats into a more meaningful fiction. Thus, the narrator asserts, "We're all in it together now. As is the case with the world situation [...] It will all get a lot woollier, messier. Everything is winding down, me, this, mother earth" (Amis 151). Everything in the novel goes terribly wrong and represents the nightmarish image that predicts the destruction of the world. Thus, the narrator brings apocalyptic setting by depicting the sufferings of the universe. He argues that "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" (Amis 151).

Time is significant in *London Fields* because "[i]t was all about *time*. Time was everywhere present, was massively operational, in the life Keith moved through. He saw how it strafed people (look at Pepsi!), how it blew them away, how it wasted them" (Amis 109). Sam describes time as the sixth force and as a dimension in that it is not used only for measuring but also to motivate. He asserts that "Uranium felt time as a force easing its journey into lead ... And human beings felt time that way too (how anthropomorphic the Theory was, how sentimental!)" (Amis 189), and then he wonders, "What is it that is always pulling us back down?" (Amis 189). Hence, he indicates that nothing is perfect. The threats that foreshadow and plague the characters every minute are full of suspense and conflicts.

II-1-6-The Dystopian Aspects in *London Fields*

There are various aspects and themes that affirm and assert the dystopian vision in the novel such as the representation of pornography, the death of love, children abuse and media's impacts. Actually, the apocalyptic setting of the novel forces to stress the dystopian aspects and depicts the threats of nuclear, ecological and climatic disasters. It offers the reader with a warning and a negative view of the future of society and illustrates how the advanced civilisation may lead to destruction.

These disasters, however, are approaching not only England but all Europe. Sam in his way to London states, "I had the airplane to myself because nobody in their right mind wants to come to Europe, not just now, not for the time being; everybody wants to go the other way" (Amis 1). Europe is described with "a new kind of conflict; *spasm war* and *unfettered war* and, unavoidably, *superwar* [which] 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 90). The foreshadowing and menace of the nuclear wars overshadow and hang over everybody in London while "the money was coming from Germany and Japan (and China?)" (Amis 89). When "'both sides agreed', to play their game in the dark" (Amis 89), they declared a policy about how media may introduce the wars to the world, admitting to "[kill] all journalists" (Amis 89). When the informant at the Red Cross shows the frightening and macabre depiction of the fighting countries, he states, "If you want to get an idea of what's happening there, read an account of what the Khmer Rouge did in the Seventies and multiply everything by ten. Body count. Area involved. No. Square it. Cube it" (Amis 90). Such events create uneasiness and disturbance and "millions needed to know whether they were living or dead" (Amis 90). Guy, also, "had never felt more alive. He had never felt happier - this was the ugly truth. Or not for

many, many years” (Amis 90). Hence, this offensive and scary simile to Khmer Rouge points out how the good manner is gone and the desire to live is almost lost.

As a dystopian story, *London Fields* provides warnings about the troubles that plague London, Europe and the universe. Though it takes place in the future in 1999, it is about yesterday and today. Sam says, “We used to live and die without any sense of the planet getting older, of mother earth getting older, living and dying” (Amis 125).

Moreover, the word ‘six’ in Nicola Six is significant. In her first meeting with Guy, he asks her what her name is and says:

“What's your name, sweetheart?’ She told him.

Keith couldn't believe his luck.

‘Sex!’

‘S-i-x. Actually it's Six.”

‘Seeks! Relax, Nicky. We get all sorts in here. Hey, cock. Guy . . .’ (Amis 24)

The way her name is represented signifies how considerable this number is and its relation to Nicola as “the source and the manipulator of the plot” (Childs 49), and of sex. Her name can be “pronounced ‘nuclear sex’” (Childs 49). She is “Necropolitan Nicola, in her crimson shoes” (Amis 296), in which “Necropolis is the name Amis gives to any post-nuclear city in ‘Unthinkability’ (EM, 15), Nicola is a nuclear Cassandra” (Childs 49). Clearly, it betokens the paradox and contradiction between man’s desire to control and his fear of female sexuality. Moreover, the repetition of the number six is a recalling to the beast’s number in *The Apocalyptic*, “She really did a number on him [Guy Clinch]. What was that number? It was Six. Six. Six” (Amis 61). Thus, Childs argues that:

Nicola Six’s name has two principal layers of meaning beyond an allusion to a character at the start of Dickens’s *Hard Times*. Her forename puns on ‘nuclear’ but is also, in its diminutive form, one of the devil’s names, while her surname gestures towards his biblical ‘number of the beast’, 666. (50)

Indeed, Nicola symbolises the devil: “there was another man in her life. His name was the Devil” (Amis 77), he “abused her on stage while his friends looked on and laughed. Her thing for the Devil — it wasn't love. No, she could take or leave the Devil in the end. Nicola only did it because it was good fun and it made God mad” (Amis 77). It is also an allusion to ‘seeks’. Nicola seeks her fate because she wants to be murdered. This thriller requires a victim which is a female character, a woman who wants to be desired. Indeed, Nicola manipulates everything, in addition to the plot. The novel, then, stresses a sense of oppression and powerlessness of the characters in the face of sex.

In addition, Nicola and Guy play significant roles in illustrating the irony that occurs in the novel. What is worth mentioning is that irony is not used for mockery but to serve, self-consciously, as a means to present fiction. She is the prominent figure to manipulate love in the book. Accordingly, Diedrick claims that “In her [Nicola's] 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 narrative habits” (120).

In other words, Nicola presents herself to Guy and pretends to be a virgin. She tries to convince him that she is in love with him and that she is waiting for the first time to have sex with him. Guy's perception, then, represents the conventional love story. This depiction is similar to the image of a virgin who is not in reality, and then she is a parody of any typical love story. Compared to her relation to Keith, she openly proclaims that she is a whore. Besides, she does not have any physical contact with him but she tapes herself allowing him to watch her. She plays a significant role of seducing and exciting the two men and can indicate both parody of love and sex in order to lay bare the conventions of

the love story. Moreover, the narrator Sam, playfully, consults the remaining of his book from her; she is aware of what he is writing about her. Eventually, she is his source of inspiration. This playfulness is extremely experimental. Yet, Sam claims, “I failed, in art and love” (Amis 296). This indicates that the failure in love is in fact the failure in writing literature which functions as a metafictional device. Similarly, the author Christensen comes to a similar conclusion when he refers to the metafictional devices in Nabokov’s novels stating that the “sexual activity has been replaced by mental activity and expresses symbolically the creation of art” (43). On the one hand, Nicola indicates both the dystopian representation of the world and the death of love; on the other hand, she lays bare the conventions of fiction.

Moreover, the narrator explains the shadows of nuclear wars that create a sense of loss and highlights how the death of love is rooted in society shaping the atmosphere:

And now the twentieth century had come along and after several try-outs and test-drives it put together an astonishing new offer: death for everybody. Death for everybody, by hemlock or hardware. If you imagined love as a force, not established and not immutable, patched together by all best intentions, kindness, forgiveness — what does love do about death for everybody? It throws up its hands, and gets weaker, and sickens. It is crowded out by its opposite. Love has at least two opposites. One is hate. One is death. (Amis 189)

The “‘death of love’ has to happen in personal relationships before it can occur on the global level” (Childs 51), and “the enemies of love dominating the characters’ interactions are sex and class” (Childs 51). The impacts of the nuclear war are illustrated by Amis through the depiction of “anticipation, anxiety, and suspense”(qtd. in Childs 51). He reinforces the fact that the threats of these nuclear wars are everlasting and “the threat of annihilation’s possibility is all that people will ever know of it” (qtd.in Childs 51).

Guy Clinch's name, also, refers to the idea of death, failure and darkness that dystopia depicts. Clinch "implies the pincer movement he will be caught in by the other two main characters" (Childs 50), and Guy refers to the historical figure Guy Fawkes which is "the defeat of whose attempt to blow up Parliament is celebrated on 5 November" (Childs 50). This event goes back to 5 November 1605 when Guy Fawkes, a group's member of provincial English Catholics, planned the failed Gunpowder Plot. The group planned to assassinate King James I, and sought help to restore the Catholic monarch to the throne. The failure led to torturing and questioning him. Thus, his name is synonymous with the Gunpowder Plot. In this sense, Guy represents death and loss of hope. Moreover, the date corresponds with the macabre date of Nicola's death and "the moment of full eclipse on November 5" (Amis 275).

Guy also "had two of everything. Two cars, two houses, two uniformed nannies, two silk-and-cashmere dinner jackets, two graphite-cooled tennis rackets, and so on and so forth. But he had only one child and only one woman" (Amis 18). This manifests and shows how objects are more important than people in the life of individuals. Guy cares about the number of cars, but the number of children is not that vital in his life. This representation of the list of things that Guy possesses is compared to the number of the family members which marks and brings to light the failure of love in front of the domination of the technological advances. Besides, the novel represents how Hope stops loving Guy. This indicates the death of love and loss of harmony between man and woman. It also points out the fact that instability in the world lies in the dissociation of families as well as relationships.

Moreover, Keith's name is also significant and flows in the dystopian stream of the novel as it "echoes that of London actor Keith Allen who has played many characters similar to Keith. He is 'the key' and 'his pub charisma'" (Amis 23). Keith was also "the pub champ. The loudest, the most booming in his shouts for more drink, the most violent in his abuse of the fruit machine, the best at darts - a darts force in the Black Cross" (Amis 23). Yet, for all the facilities and opportunities in his life, he is not talented. This quality is described in Amis's Forward to *The War Against Cliché* (2001) as a natural barrier to the forces of democratisation. Childs believes that Keith might be a good example to represent such a quality and quotes the words of Amis:

Some citadels, true, have become stormable. You can become rich without having any talent (via the scratchcard and the rollover jackpot). You can become famous without having any talent (by abasing yourself on some TV nerdathon: a clear improvement on the older method of simply killing a celebrity and inheriting the aura). But you cannot become talented without having any talent. Therefore, talent must go.
(50)

Amis, here, is introducing the situation that plague the society in which individuals are not required to be intellectual or have any talent in order to live a luxurious life. Moreover, talent is not that important to achieve fame and reputation in the country. Media plays a significant role in shaping the fame of individuals who can easily become popular by humiliating and humbling themselves on TV. It displays the impact of the individual's interest in TV as a source of information. Moreover, the novel shows how the advanced technology regiments the character's lives and how it enslaves them. The power of technology, then, is one of the central themes.

Furthermore, children behave strangely showing a sense of innocence's loss in the time of advanced technology. The depiction of the children highlights the dystopian characteristics in the novel. For instance, the narrator "saw a toddler in the park wearing an earring (pierced), and another with a tattoo (bruised songbird). There are babies tricked

out with wigs and eyeglasses and toy dentures. Wheeled in bathchairs” (Amis 179). He also comments after this description, stressing the dystopian feature in depicting babies, “Now I know the British Empire isn't in the shape it once was. But you wonder: what will the *babies'* babies look like?” (Amis 179). Besides, the best examples of children's depiction in Amis's *London Fields* are Kim and Marmaduke. They indicate the horrifying and frightening impacts of crimes, violence and sex in society that cope with the dystopian novels. When the narrator unbuttons Kim on the living-room floor, in order to change her diaper, he wonders, “What kind of planet is it where you feel relief, where you feel surprise, that a nought-year- old girl is still a virgin?” (Amis 291). Besides, the narrator discovers cigarette effects in her body. While Kim shares the general preoccupation with ideas of the unpleasant view of children, Marmaduke represents the impacts of pornography. He is so attracted to it that he may have sex everywhere and with everybody.

The narrator asserts:

Turn your back for ten seconds and he's in the fire or out the window or over in the corner, fucking a light socket [...] His chaos is strongly sexual, no question. If you enter his nursery you'll usually find him with both hands down the front of his diaper, or behind the reinforced bars of his playpen leering over a swimsuit ad in one of the magazines that some nanny has thrown in to him ... Marmaduke looks as though he is already contemplating a career in child pornography: he knows it's out there, and he can tell that there's a quick buck in it. (Amis 100)

In addition, he suffers from an Oedipal rivalry with his father. This is clearly introduced when Hope shows feelings of hatred towards Guy; and Marmaduke starts behaving in a good manner as a result of his satisfaction with what is happening. He, then, stands as a warning to the threats of the new generation that is brought up in society. Both the parents of Kim and Marmaduke are not safe and show anxiety.

II-1-7-*London Fields* and the Death of the Author

The theme of death is prominent in Amis's novel where he links the creation of art to the death of characters or the death of love. Samson Young is a narrator who kills himself at the end of the novel, indicating the death of the author. In his essay "The Death of the Author as Cultural Critique in *London Fields*", Fredrick Holmes reinforces:

Martin Amis's *London Fields* both comically illustrates Roland Barthes's thesis about the death of the author and parodies it by rendering it literal. The novel self-consciously dramatizes a contest for authorship ; all of the characters are 'authors' of one sort or another who are vying with each other to shape events into the form of a story that will count as authoritative. None, however, is the real originator of the plots. (Holmes in Alfonso 53)

The quotation points out the various strategies and techniques that Amis employs in order to get the reader involved in discovering who is in control of the novel and examining the narrative authority. Hutcheon also reinforces a similar idea stating that "[i]n literary terms, the much-celebrated and lamented death of the author has not meant an end to novelists, as we all know it. It has meant a questioning of authority." (190). Clearly, the death of the author does not refer to his end or to the literal meaning of death, but it draws the attention of the reader to investigate authority. In other words, the writer does not fill in empty pages with a text but the text fills a place called a writer.

Unlike the belief that the writer is the one who writes and the literary criticism's approaches which depend mostly on the author , "The Death of the Author" demonstrates that writing creates an author and not vice versa. It emphasises the importance of delving into text and meaning rather than emphasising on the author's identity. It, then, aims at liberating writing from the absolute power of the author and asserts that the birth of the postmodernist writer blends the birth of his text. Thus, the death of the text announces

the death of its writer. This stems from the fact that “the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as to never rest any one of them” (qtd.in Holmes in Alfonso 53). In the view of these aspects of an author explained in Barthes’s essay, one may examine the issue of death referring to the main character Sam, because his suicide refers directly to this point. What is worth mentioning is that the novel does not only highlight and question the originality of novels but also the fictionality and originality of characters.

Holmes, also, remarks that “[t]his aimed -for and ultimately achieved death is a postmodernist parody of the deconstructionist position on language and meaning. The murder is a way of supplying closure and generating a teleological structure which confers the extra-textual meaning denied by post-structuralist theory” (Holmes in Alfonso 53). Death and murder are vital notions that reinforce the postmodernist perspective of the narrative.

In this novel, not only the author dies but also his characters in an attempt to display an author who can kill his characters at the end of the story. The death of both the author and the characters shows that not only the author dies with the text but also the characters do in order to question the authenticity and originality of the writer as well as their characters. Besides, Nicola is the main character in Sam’s work as he imitates the events from her life and diaries. This imitation represents the role of any writer who imitates from life to illustrate his inability to invent.

In her book *Metafiction*, Patricia Waugh considers “the death of the author as “paradoxical concept as metafiction shows” (134), because “[t]he more the author appears,

the less he or she exists. The more the author flaunts his or her presence in the novel, the more noticeable is his or her absence outside it” (134). This indicates Barthes’s claim that “the *death* of the author makes possible the *birth* of the reader” (qtd.in Waugh 134). In order to examine Barthes’s notion, Waugh states that using the ‘I’ of the narrator points out that this author is addressing his speech to his readers and at the same time he deals with the characters in the novel. Thus, the ‘I’ of the narrator “talks to the characters in the novel, and therefore exists at the level of the story and at the level of discourse,” then “he becomes part of the reader’s own subjectivity” which allows this reader to “invest a part of [himself] in the stranger ‘I’” (qtd.in Waugh 134). What is needed to be added is that Amis’s excessive use of the ‘I’ shows how involved the author is in the text.

It also reinforces that the text creates the author who is also the creation of readers. The novel also slips into third person narration incorporating perspectives presented by Guy, Nicola and Keith. What is worth mentioning here is that Patricia Waugh explains this metafictional indication. She states that:

There are an increasing number of metafictional novels which similarly play with the relations between story and discourse. A common strategy is to begin a novel in the first person and then to shift to third-person narration and then back again ... Metafictional novels which shift from the personal form ‘I’ of discourse to the impersonal ‘he’ of story remind the reader that the narrating ‘I’ is the subject of the discourse, and is a different ‘I’ from the ‘I’ who is the subject of the story. And finally, of course, there is yet another level of subjectivity, for behind the whole discourse is the authorial ‘I’, a subjectivity [...] present only in terms of its real absence. (Waugh 135)

It is the use of free indirect style that results from the viewpoints of Nicola, Guy and Keith which blend together to comprise and frame the third person section in the text. The novel, then, examines the author’s will to power by highlighting the writers’ rivalry,

laying bare the act of creation and allowing both the author- figures as well as the authorial narrators to play an indicative role within the narrative.

Moreover, this metafictional novel illustrates that “composing a novel is basically no different from composing or constructing one’s ‘reality’” and also questions “the notion of the novelist as God” (Waugh 24). This allows challenging the realist conventions and undermining the omniscient narrator, “godlike author” (Waugh 6).

Death and originality are connected; the dialogue between Sam and Nicola asserts her originality to remind Nicola, on the same page, that she is dying as well as he is; it points out that characters as well as books cannot be treated as extremely original. Samson Young says to Nicola, “I salute your beauty and your originality and so on” (Amis 79), and then continue the conversation:

I looked around the room and back again. I nodded.

'You're dying, aren't you.'

'We all are,' I said.

Well, yes, we all are, in a way. But in different lanes, at different speeds in different cars.

(Amis 76)

Here, Amis reinforces and stresses that not only the author dies but also the other characters referring to the link between death and originality.

Furthermore, through the character Sam, the reader is required to examine the boundaries between fiction and reality. He is also required to question both the reliability and the authority of the writer.

II-2- In a Quest for Despair, Discontent and Meaninglessness in *London Fields*

II-2-1-The Significance of the Death of God

As a typical example of postmodernist writing, *London Fields* breaks away from all the rules and conforms to the content of the metafictional absurd by capturing human situation and assimilating the human existence. This novel also handles the meaninglessness as well as the absurdity of human existence. It employs various devices such as paradox and questionable relations between readers, narrators as well as narratives. In addition, it is full of contradictions, fragmentations and paradoxes which lay bare the chaotic condition of the universe in comparison to the chaotic technique and form.

Unlike the modernist quest for meaning in a chaotic world, the postmodernists abandon, often playfully, the possibility of meaning, and this is precisely what Amis's novel does. Actually, it is a parody of this quest, making use of what John Barth calls 'exhausted' and 'used up' forms and allows the move beyond its textual boundaries.

To put it more simply, this novel deconstructs the realist conventions and undermines the author's ability to control his book. It also challenges the claim that "in fiction characters are trapped within the novelist's script, and in 'reality' people are part of the book written by the hand of God" (Waugh 119). Thus, the metafictional writers are interested in liberating writing from the hands of writers. This is "a consequence of the perceived analogy between plot in fiction and the 'plot' of God's creation" (Waugh 120). According to John Fowles, "the author is still a god, but 'what has changed is that we are no longer the Gods of the Victorian image, with freedom our first principle, not authority'" (Waugh 119).

The death of the author parallels the death of God which is mentioned in the famous statement of Nietzsche “God is dead” (Rosen xxiii). This comes from the fact that Nietzsche considered himself to be living in “the age of the death of God” (qtd. in Cornwell 7) and “a God-less universe” (qtd.in Cornwell 7) beneath a “morality of decadence” (qtd. in Cornwell 7). In the medieval era, Western societies believed God to be “organizing the society and establishing regulations” (Kuçlu 160). After the death of God, Western man “has lost the meaning of life” (Kulçu 160). Accordingly, Gianni Vattimo (1936), an Italian philosopher and politician, claims that Nietzschean phrase: ‘God is dead’ does not refer to “the non- existing God, in the sense of a flat footed metaphysical pronouncement; it suggests, rather, that the “objective world” can no longer be built on transcendent foundation (qtd.in Kulçu 160). It also indicates that “God is no longer available to [them] as the unchanging and immutable first foundation (Kulçu 160). Vattimo also reinforces the fact that “when Nietzsche teaches that God is dead, he doesn’t only mean that there are no longer supreme values, he also means that a multitude of values has taken their place at the ruined foundation...” (qtd. in Kulçu 160).

In order to maintain their lives, people seek a meaning. Yet, the issue which is of crucial importance and which is debatable is to question values and the so called ‘universal’ meaning. Man asked how he could achieve universal meaning and values where he became the supreme value and not God; however, the inability of the Western society to find meaning resulted in chaos, alienation, meaninglessness, loss and absurdity.

In other words, there is an inherent link between the death of God and absurdity. Besides, Julian Young (1943), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Auckland , states that “post-death-of- God philosophers are generally [agreed] that there is no meaning

of life, that life as such is meaningless; ‘chaos’ (Nietzsche), ‘absurd’ (Camus)” (qtd.in Kulçu 160).

The death of God may also refer to the indication of Beckett’s writing whom Ihab Hassan comments on and states that Beckett’s interest lies in illustrating the meaninglessness and nothingness of the world. Beckett says that if “God is dead, then nothing is permitted, and man is superfluous. A universe drained entirely of life or consciousness, drifting ever slower into empty spaces – such may be his vision of apocalypse” (qtd.in Slocombe 216).

Wondering how to illustrate the relationship between Guy and Nicola, the narrator of *London Fields* states, “God did it. It was God: the oldest trick in the book” (Amis 85). In addition, Nicola Six is living her life dismissing the domination of God and claims, “[t]o my everything, He [God] is *nothing*. What I am I wish to be, and what I wish to be I am. I am beyond God. I am the motionless Cause” (Amis 85). Both quotes underline the absurd view of the individuals to the notion of God where people are seeking freedom from the domination of deity. The narrator, also, asserts that “[p]erhaps love was dying, was already dead. One more catastrophe. The death of God was possibly survivable in the end. But if love was going the same way, if love was going out with God ...[Amis’s ellipsis]” (Amis 84). This encounter between death of love and death of God ends with dark twist as it indicates disconnection, instability and loss of moral values in Amis’s fictional world. Postmodernists, then “[depose] a tyrannical God and [replace] him with an equally tyrannical Man” (Slocombe 84).

In Act III, the fifth chapter, Waugh explains how some characters are in search of an author. Nicola is looking for her murderer and she seeks to discover his identity. She is

fully aware of what will happen to her and she can write her own story in her diary. The Murderer is himself the narrator, Sam, who imitates her story in a literary work. Thus, Nicola can represent this kind of characters that Waugh examines. This can refer to three important concepts in *London Fields*, a murderer, an author and God. It is “a concern with the idea of being trapped within someone else’s order” (Waugh 120). This analogy is an indication of the novel that these three crucial notions work for similar aim.

Moreover, the main themes of the novel, however, are crime, power, violence and racism. They are closely related to the existential quest of finding meaning to life. The novel highlights the mystery of the world as well as the individual’s existence. In other words, *London Fields* switches and deviates from the epistemological question of *knowledge’s reliability* to the ontological question of *being* by handling parody. In addition, both absurdity and metafiction in the novel signify a deep examination of consciousness and the world of fiction and reality. Hence, the concern of the contemporary writing stresses the issue that it does not matter who is speaking and attempts to undermine any authority. Consequently, alienation, loss and meaninglessness are important connotations in Amis’s novel to serve as aspects of absurdity. Finney goes to say that “Amis uses excess and the subversion of mimetic conventions to represent the modern world’s self-alienation and sense of loss” (119). Chaos, for instance, is depicted to represent the individual’s perspectives from the urbanised London. Actually, Amis’s London is not a rural one, but it indicates Thatcher’s England as it illustrates the working class and poverty where “[o]n the street the poor rock and sway, like burying parties. All their eyes are ice” (Amis 75). Amis also describes it as a pub stating, “the smoke and builders’ dust, the toilet tang, the streets like a terrible carpet” (Amis 2). This novel, then, provides a strict division of the characters according to their class, ability.

II-2-2- Absurdity in *London Fields*: Apocalypse, Dystopia and Comic Situations

Martin Amis employs apocalypse to represent London where the nuclear disaster and the climate change hang over everyone. It is a useful strategy to give a comprehensive message about catastrophes in fiction. In his definition of apocalypse, Slocombe attempts to clarify the significance of both apocalypse and the Absurd in postmodern literature:

The concept of ‘apocalypse’ is actually one of the most important features of postmodern literature, encompassing both ‘the absurd’ and ‘absence’: the absurd is the response to apocalypse and absence is what remains after the apocalypse. The literature of the postmodern apocalypse is essentially one that deals with the extreme limits of being as it were the end of the world. (Slocombe157-158)

Apocalypse in Martin Amis’s *London Fields* is characterised by drawing on themes that can be examined in terms of their significance to the sense of absurdity, such as the millennium’s finale, climatic change and the threats of nuclear disasters; violence, corruption and death. Moreover, the novel delineates the zeitgeist, the spirit of the age, which announces the metafictional intimation. ‘Amisian London’ is characterised by affliction and epidemic planet and also a city in which the tap water “had passed at least twice through every granny” (Amis123). It, then, reinforces the view of Amis which is characterised by incorporating apocalypse as ecological disaster, social malaise, nuclear threats and astronomical events at the end of the millennium. Furthermore, London is ruined by corruption where “darts is what the Brits do best, in the afterglow of empire” (Amis 133); “[a]nd this also”, says Conrad’s Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, looking down the Thames towards the great luminous city, ‘has been one of the dark places of the earth.’ In *London Fields*, it is again a dark place – terminally dark.”¹ Like apocalypse, the absurd is not purely a postmodernist concept because “it emerges throughout late-nineteenth- and

¹ See the introduction of *London Fields* written by John Sutherland, par.3 (<http://www.randomhouse.com>).

twentieth-century literature, from the plays of Alfred Jarry and Eugène Ionesco to the prose of John Barth and Kurt Vonnegut” (Slocombe 199). Moreover, it calls for “two possible responses to nihilism – a comic laughter in the face of meaninglessness or a tragic cry for meaning” (Slocombe 199). Consequently, absurdity emerges “from classical definitions of tragedy as it does from twentieth-century preoccupations with meaninglessness” (Slocombe 199).

London Fields represents an apocalyptic novel as metafiction. It questions the way people make sense of the world by examining a sense of loss and self-alienation. It also undermines the truth and introduces that uncertainty is the more common experience. It exhibits the enduring and constant nuclear fear in Europe.

Moreover, dystopia in the postmodernist novel is not only a concept that can be examined in terms of the fictional world, but also an existential experience; it creates a sense of absurdity through investigating the human nature and the attitudes that acquire specific expressions in dystopias determined by absurdity. Hence, it occurs in novels as a mode of the absurdity’s discourse. As a result of a failed utopia and the decisive indication of absurdity, the dystopian forms are depicted through issues such as freedom, decision and choice. Besides, such forms highlight the borderline between death and life. They also point out the negative features that individuals or characters in times of crisis show and, at times, represent their refusal to the domination of God or society within the walls of fiction. Yet, it highlights and provides a view of man’s failure to find meaning or to succeed in his revolt. In other words, *London Fields* handles suspense and darkness which are the traditional ingredients of a murder mystery with a dose of postmodernist literary showiness and Amis’s special brand of gleeful humour. *It is set in a world waiting*

in terror for an unspecified apocalypse with nature which sickens and a narrator who is slowly dying of terminal illness and of what seems like nuclear poisoning.

Furthermore, Amis's novel is "a dystopian vision of the state of the world at the turn of the millennium, and a brilliant use of different voices and linguistic devices to draw attention to the literary medium that controls all the characters come close to caricature (a few critics claim that they are mere caricatures)" (Finney 51). This is the pun that characterises Amis's novel and points out playfulness of the postmodernist novel.

Since there are some tragic elements which the representation of absurdity highlights, "[a]bsurd art is not purely a comic form" (Slocombe 204); thus, [a]bsurdity is more accurately defined as 'nihilistic farce'" (Slocombe 204). Yet, it makes use of comic situations as a result of alienation and loss which dominate the fictional world of characters (or individuals). It borrows ironic elements in the sake of criticising the calamities and the threats which the novel portrays. This stems from the fact that the metafictional and absurdist novels employ an idea followed by another idea that is not connected and break down the conventional chain of events or plots. Accordingly, Amis "makes metafictional fun of the literary conventions he simultaneously employs, playing with the characters, the narrator, and the reader" (Finney 53). The novel, then, puts together the comic situation and the warnings that result from the apocalyptic description of the ecological, astronomical and the nuclear disasters. Hence, "the decision whether to laugh or to cry at the absurdity of life is fundamentally the position we take in response to the absurd artwork" (Slocombe 205). Actually, readers may laugh at "the antics of absurd characters, if [they] include [themselves] in this 'absurd world', then [they] see the tragic elements of the absurd" (Slocombe 205); this is due to the paradox of postmodernist fiction.

CONCLUSION

London Fields is a confounding and compelling work about the absurdity of human life wrapped in a work of fiction that, playfully, draws attention to its artificiality. This chapter demonstrates the fictional narrative significance of ironising and parodying previous works. It suggests that the novel under consideration here exhibits the metafictional indication by employing the multiplicity of genres. One cannot classify the novel to one genre because of the events that overlap in the different acts and scenes and which have its roots in Barth's conceptions of the exhausted literature as well as imitation. The chapter's central point of investigation has been the novel's exhibition of the prominence and magnitude of the postmodernist novel's parody of form. In other words, it examines parody not as a comment on life but as a comment on literature. Moreover, absurdity is demonstrated through close analysis of the postmodernist apocalyptic and dystopian fiction, and intimately linked to metafiction. Hence, Amis's novel displays all of these characteristics and takes the ambition to submerge the commentaries on the act of writing to a paradoxical extreme.

Chapter Three

On Reality and Illusion: Self-Reflexive Writing

INTRODUCTION

More than any other distinguished postmodernist writer, Martin Amis has contributed to the process of willingly integrating the reader in the process of writing. In his full-of-gaps text, *M.A.* (Martin Amis or Mark Asprey) attempts to invite the reader to be part of this fictional production, and then frustrates his potentials to authority. The chapter aims at shedding much light on creating multiple layers of narration and the surrogate author's use. It also tries to examine the characters' roles which, self-consciously, reveal and disclose the literary conventions that frame or adjust the events. Moreover, the discussion of each part of the novel challenges the notion of the autonomy and the authority of the writers and, at times, calls into question the possibility of the literary originality. The chapter will, further, examine the chaotic form of the postmodernist novel and highlights the relation between reality and language.

III-1-Self-Consciousness and Self-Reflexivity in *London Fields*' Note

Baldick defines the phrase self-reflexive as “a term applied to literary works that openly reflect upon their own processes of artful composition” (231). It indicates both self-referentiality and self-consciousness where the narrator in is sometimes called a “self-conscious narrator” (Baldick 232).

Eventually, there are a lot of metafictional features that crop up in the postmodernist note of *London Fields*. The reader may notice that this note can be considered as part of the novel and inside the story, because it is inserted between the table of contents and the entry of Sam's diary. This is a commentary on the conventional novel which locates the note outside the story and is mainly used to provide illustration of the book. Besides, it points out that the note is as important as the chapters and should not be ignored as subsidiary or supplementary part.

The note also reinforces the difficulty that the writer faces in order to choose a title. Amis run into the problem of making a title to the novel and “[s]everal alternatives suggested themselves” (Amis, the Note). In fact, the “suggestions cost [him] sleep” (Amis, the Note). As a postmodernist writer, he is referring to the inability of the writer to depict a title to his production of art. This is another important metafictional device that lays bare the fictionality of the book and “[t]he entire ontological status of the fictional narrative is put into question from the moment it opens” (Finney 147).

Thus, the note serves as a means to speak the unspeakable. In other words, it illustrates the artificiality and fictionality of the novel by unsettling the narrative authority; and also it elucidates how tricky and knotted finding the suitable title is.

Moreover, this introductory note is signed M.A. and the reader, then, is left asking whether these initials refer to Amis and the note, then, belongs to him, or it belongs to Mark Asprey, and the novel is mainly the work that is published after the death of Sam.

Approaching his death, Sam claims that he feels “as if someone made [him] up, for money” (Amis 297). Hence, Finney quotes in his book the description of Dern: “*London Fields* is at least two books under one cover” (53).

Putting it differently, Amis inserts and projects himself in the novel via Asprey who stands as a surrogate writer. Consequently, the study of the note alone suggests that Martin Amis is fictionalising and projecting himself into a fictional character, tearing down the illusion’s wall that stands between the author and the reader. This represents, both ironically and self- consciously, another layer that blurs the line between reality and fiction since the absolute reality is that the author is only another level of fiction.

In addition to that, the note announces a higher authority over Sam. The expression “my narrator” (Amis, the Note) in the novel stands for Sam and highlights the presence of a literary constructor. Hence, the relation between fiction and reality is at once sophisticated and shown masterfully enough to make the book a difficult yet a worthwhile masterpiece.

III-2-The Table of Contents in *London Fields*

Rosen claims that “[t]he preoccupation with the artificiality of story-making is a defining feature of the literary style called metafiction” (123). It “seeks to unmask the fictions by which we live by calling attention to the process of storyfying” (123). Contrary to Sam’s assertion that the novel is a “true story” (Amis 1), the use of the table of contents reinforces the fact that *London Fields* is a fictional production in which the chapters are organised according to the setting of the novel. It asserts the contradiction between, what Waugh calls, “truth” and “lie” (87). It also indicates the shift from “realism through modernist forms to contemporary metafiction” (Waugh 87). This shift is mainly “an acknowledgement of the primary reality not of [the] ‘commonsense’ context of everyday reality but of the *linguistic* context of the literary text [Waugh’s italics]” (Waugh 87).

Eventually, the last twelve chapters of Amis’s novel are not structured around one known character, whereas the first twelve chapters signify and focus on one of the characters. For instance, the first three chapters are entitled the Murderer, the Murderee and the Foil. In fact, they refer to Keith, Nicola and Guy. When the reader compares the chapters to the events of the novel, he discovers unstable and unsteady order. This indicates both instability and chaos in writing fiction. It also creates a sense of interference and confusion.

Moreover, the style of Sam completely changes because of a failed trip to America. It becomes apparent and explicit that the chaos prevails and takes over the last half of the novel as well as the table of contents. It is the uncontrolled outburst of anger and frustration that affects the patterns as well as the format of Sam’s story.

Putting it differently, the mood of the narrator reflects the structure of the chapter. This betokens the writer's block which results from psychological effects as well as the difficulties of writing that stand in the way of the narrator. It also illustrates the fact that forcing the writing process to happen may only worsen things. In fact, this is the result of trying to inwardly juggle too many ideas at the same time and to disregard the mental situation's effects on writing.

Furthermore, the table dismisses the realists' appeal to represent life as it is; it may "lull the reader, not into acceptance of the scene as *real*, but into acceptance of its reality as *a sentence in a book* [Waugh's italics]" (Waugh 95). Compared to the quotation of Sam, the table indicates that it is impossible to copy life into writing and to convince the reader to think it is real. When the novel progresses, the reader comes across the contradictions between what he expects at the beginning of the book and the commentaries provided by the narrator.

Similarly, Amis claims that his novel started as "a sixty- page novella called the 'Murderee'" (Finney 50). It was mainly about the way "the Keith figure and the Nicola figure move towards each other until he murders her;" it converted to a novel when a "potential murderer" was presented and Sam became "the major player" (Finney 50). Eventually, Sam has only "written two factual books of memoirs and journalism," (Finney 50) "praised for their honesty, their truthfulness" (Amis 25). This illustration explains the inconsistency as well as the discrepancy between the table of contents and the chapters.

III-3-Confrontation between Sam's Diary and Asprey's Novel

Amis's novel is a mixture of the disasters' threats, the weather and imminent 'Crisis.' Yet, the diary, the thoughts of Sam, his illness and his struggle with writing pervade the book. They intermingle with the story and the reader finds that they are part of a book called *London Fields*. The suspensions and the comments provided by Sam arouse the reader's expectation of the events that are coming. For instance, Sam refers to himself as a novelist, and then he states that he is "ready to write" (Amis 2). Moreover, to introduce the first chapter, he states: "Let's start with the bad guy. Yeah. Keith. Let's start with *the murderer* [Amis's italics]" (Amis 2); and again in the second chapter's introduction, he comments: "But none of this would ever have gotten started without the girl. It didn't have a hope in hell without the girl. Nicola Six was the miracle, the absolute donée. She's *perfect* for me. And now she'll be taking things into her own hands [Amis's italics]" (Amis 9). In addition to that, Guy Clinch is introduced as the third character: "I am cultivating our third party, the foil, the foal, Guy Clinch, who, to my horror, seems to be a genuinely delightful human being" (Amis 9) and: "When I take on Chapter 3, when I take on Guy Clinch, I'll have to do, well, not happiness, but goodness, anyway. It's going to be rough" (Amis 14). These comments, however, point out that the novel is not a work of fiction which tells a story about characters, but fiction about the writing of fiction which mixes up remarks and disparate stories.

The reader, then, spends time, not to say waste time, in order to put the segments together. He may expect a diary which has no story and which can be ignored while reading. Also, he may expect that these fragmented passages are not related and appear to have little or no bearing on the events in Sam's novel. Yet, the diary serves as a means to understand his novel and one should not undermine its strong link to the main story.

In other words, the diary is not only an illustration of what the main story entails but it is a vital part of the story itself.

What is needed to be added is that the commentaries of Sam on his story, self-consciously and systematically, play significant roles to lay bare the artificiality of fiction. He asserts: "For reasons not yet altogether clear, I seem to have adopted a jovial and lordly tone" (Amis 6). In addition, he attempts to supply the novel with some materials and states: "I can eke out Chapter 4 with Keith's sexual confessions (vicious, detailed and unstoppable), which, at this stage, are the purest gold" (Amis 26).

Moreover, he anticipates the next chapter on page 49: "warmly looking forward to the domestic haven, the blameless hearth of Chapter 6," and on another page: "I have a hysterical urge to burst right into Chapter 7, to write all night and beyond!" (Amis 64). These remarks are indications to the link between Sam's novel and diary which abolishes the reader to make any effort to disconnect or break them.

The passages and statements from Sam's diary, which are published in Asprey's novel, function as metafictional devices in the novel which tends to be constructed on the principle of "a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion" (Waugh 6). It may also tend "to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction" (Waugh 6).

Moreover, Sam aims at shaping the expectation of the reader by claiming the novel to be real. The characters Nicola, Guy and Keith are real from his perspective, but in fact the use of table of contents asserts the fact that Sam is as fictional as these characters to the reader.

III-4-Scrutinising Authority in *London Fields*

III-4-1- The Writer

A sense of confusion is created about authority in *London Fields* which “self-consciously dramatizes a contest for authorship; all of the characters are “authors” in one sort or another who are vying with each other to shape events into the form of a story that will count as authoritative”(Holmes in Alfonso 53). Holmes’s quotation indicates and denotes that all the characters aspire to authority over the text. Thus, Finney describes the novel as an “extremely literary novel which all the characters resort to writing or at least to making fiction” (53).

What is worth mentioning here is that the reader also aspires to be the controlling force of the narrative. Amis asserts that the art’s endeavour is to make the reader “share not the emotions of the people in the book but the emotions of its author” (qtd. in Childs 37). Moreover, the metafictional aspect of Martin Amis’s work is manifested in the relationship between the characters and their author Sam.

In fact, the belief that there is one inherent meaning of a work of art is eventually overthrown and reversed by postmodernist writers who also reject the originality of the work. When Sam writes a letter to Mark Asprey, he asks him to “[b]e [his] literary executor” and “throw everything out” (Amis 296). Though, Asprey neglects Sam’s request, publishes the work as his property.

Moreover, introducing the higher authority of Mark Asprey intimates a quest of authority. The reader may seem perplexed whether Amis projects himself via author surrogate, Sam, as the critic Holmes suggests or via Mark Asprey, who shares the same initials with him, as the critic Finney suggests.

Consequently, the novel “[breaks] the conventions that separate authors from implied authors from narrators from implied readers from readers” (Waugh 134). On the level of metafictional play, involution and author surrogate can foreground the role of the author. Amis’s use of the initials M.A. intimates that the writer is a constructed character within a narrative and not omniscient. Sam also says, “Sometimes (I don’t know) I take knight’s jump out of my head and I think I’m in a book written by somebody else” (Amis 260). It soon becomes clear that there is not one writer. Sam, here, wonders whether he is real or just a fictional construct. Accordingly, Finney proclaims that “Sam, with his obsession to tell the truth, becomes the butt of “MA’s” (Martin Amis and Mark Asprey’s) satire” (53) and “at the end he acknowledges the shadowy presence of his ultimate author-Martin Amis” (53). Asprey, however, “is another character behind whom is Amis” (Holmes in Alfonso 54).

Eventually, this can indicate that the novel dismisses Sam’s ownership of the novel. His imagination’s lack discloses his control over the literary materials though he is supplied with the linguistic finery of the developed narrative style.

Moreover, the novel is multi – layered as it acts on so many levels. While the first layer is introduced through three protagonists who act as inadequate and awkward narrators, namely Keith Talent, Guy Clinch and Nicola Six, the second level is presented through the surrogate writer, Sam. Then, there is Mark Asprey who demonstrates the third level of narration. Sam introduces him to the readers asserting that “everyone was frankly electrified when I let slip my connexion to the great man” (Amis 27).

The reader may feel confused and perplexed about these layers. Once he reaches the third level, he realises that Sam does not represent reality. He is not that real writer who

is writing a fictional novel; and he does not differ from the narrators of the first layer, who are supposed to be fictional by creating them in his work. Accordingly, Finney claims that:

[Amis's] narrators may stand outside the narrative (what Genette calls extradiegetic) or –more often- are themselves major characters within the narrative (intradiegetic)(Genette 1972:227-34). In either case, they are usually highly intrusive narrators offering observations to the reader on the action or commenting metafictionally on the narrative act in which they are involved. To add to this use of a self-conscious intrusive voice, Amis sometimes introduces what is called “narrative involution,” which involves the entry into the fictional world of the author- or, rather, of the fictionalized quasi-author who provides one more persona distancing the author from his creation. This use of narrators and authorial stand-ins creates multiple levels of narrative [...] (124)

The meta-narration, which Sam provides, suggests that it is as fictional as the other acts of the novel. Playing on narrative authority and raising questions about who is in control of the novel results in the examination of the author's presence in the work.

Eventually, involution characterises all of Amis's works and *London Fields* in particular. In addition, Mark Asprey shares the initials M.A. of Martin Amis, the real novelist of the book. He is the author who publishes the story after the death of Sam. Thus, beneath “the “author's” narration stands that of the narrator (what Genette calls the metadiegetic level)” (Finney 124). In addition, beneath the narrator's narration “stands that of the characters, who often produce their own written narratives that provide a fourth level of narration” (Finney 124). This indicates the “endless sophisticated games” (Finney 124) that Amis plays. The transparency here serves as a metafictional device, and through these narrators the reader needs to examine the “boundaries between the literary and the traditionally extra-literary, between fiction and non-fiction, and ultimately, between art and life” (Hutcheon 225).

Hence, the novel undermines the supreme authority of the author by creating this kind of multiplicity. It unsettles the narrative authority and indicates the narration's instability.

One may claim that since the novelist creates the characters, he, then, has the full rights of his own creation. Yet, this postmodernist novel celebrates the use of commentaries upon the writing craft and employs metafiction to dismiss the author's narrative primacy within the novel: the presence of a single all-powerful authority. Accordingly, Sam asserts that he is "just an observer. Or a listener" (Amis 39). When he discusses the progress of the novel with Nicola, he believes himself to be "a civilian [and] immune" (Amis 76). He compares his task to the fly which affirms his inability and weakness to create. He says, "If London is a spider's web, then where do I fit in? May be I'm the fly. I'm the fly" (Amis 2). Later, he introduces Heisenberg's principle that "an observed system inevitably interacts with its observer" (Amis 118), which reinforces his deficiency, reliance on others and powerlessness.

In addition, he reinforces that his story is a documentary undermining his mastery and adequacy to the effective writing skills: "Let me soberly state that I don't think my book is really prizewinning material. Though the panel might feel differently about it if they knew it was true. Christ, it's only just occurred to me: people are going to imagine that I actually sat down and made all this stuff up" (Amis 192).

Moreover, Sam wants to be a professional writer who can exploit the naivety and silliness of his narrator as well as his characters. But in fact, Nicola puts the plot at his drain and disposal as she is in control of it. After all, she "undoes his book, just as she destroyed Asprey's novel, by changing his ending and making him the murderer.

The narrator is outnarrated by one of his own characters” (Finney 53). Nicola, then, is a self-destructive and self-conscious character. Sam argues, “She outwrote me. Her story worked. And mine didn't. There's really nothing more to say. Always me: from the first moment in the Black Cross she looked my way with eyes of recognition. She knew that she had found him: her murderer” (Amis 295-296). It seems clear that Sam is unable to carry on his story, and then he is only a character in Nicola’s plot or story as she is making efforts to make her story work. Besides, Finney claims that “Nicola’s knowledge of future events puts her on a par with Amis, the author” (50). Hence, Amis, playfully, stimulates and actuates his readers to question authority and investigate who is in control of the novel.

Furthermore, the self-conscious style of Amis’s work illustrates the evasiveness of the narration and highlights the fictionality of the book. For instance, in the first chapter, the description of Keith Talent shows the need for repetition which weakens the position of the narrator: “Keith Talent was a bad guy. Keith Talent was a very bad guy. You might even say he was the worst guy. But not *the* worst, not the very worst ever. There *were* worse guys [Amis’s italics]” (Amis 2). Repetition, here, works in the level of introducing the writing’s style and arouses the expectation of the reader about the remains of the book. It diminishes and weakens the power of the narrator as it lays bare his disability to anticipate his materials or to write an effective piece of writing. This echoes Sam’s inability to dominate his work.

III-4- 2- The Self- Conscious Reader of the Novel

Though *London Fields* compels the reader to keep reading and urges him to read closely, it frustrates his potentials to be the owner of the work or to try to stretch his control over the novel. Moreover, it often reminds him that it is a work of art instead of serving as a faithful representation of the real world; it delves into concepts like a writer, a reader and a text. These notions are the metafictional devices that Amis makes use of so as to exhibit the postmodern condition with the paradoxical self-reflexive novel and the parodic mystery. Thus, the novel lays bare the artificiality of the realism's mimetic illusion. As Amis asserts to an interviewer, "I'm all for this intense relationship with the reader. I really want the reader in there [...] I really want him close" (qtd. in Finney 126). The novel builds playfully a relationship between self-conscious reader, self-conscious character, self-conscious style and self-conscious author. It "makes metafictional fun of the literary conventions [Amis] simultaneously employs, playing with the characters, the narrator, and the reader" (Finney 53). Thus, Finney elucidates the function of the readers in Amis's novels and expounds how he allows them to share their views on the process of writing.

In fact, the reader is allowed to participate in this novel and is invited to interpret it as a continuous rewriting. Waugh asserts that the "metafictional novelists make the reader explicitly aware of his or her role as player" (42). Similarly, Amis's reader takes charge of contributing to the meaning of the novel and making sense of the text. Paradoxically, *London Fields* demonstrates a play of power between the reader and the author. It questions authority by integrating the different perspectives and celebrating the multiplicity of meaning and perception.

He argues that:

[b]y inserting the writer's substitute self, the narrator, into the action, the author is inviting his reader to share with him his unease at the roles he is asked to play as novelist. In effect he is problematizing the act of narration and implicating his wanton readers in the way they – we – encourage him to play god and kill his characters for his and our support. Amis wants his readers, like a theatre audience, to recognize their simultaneous immersion in and exteriority to the action. (126)

The quotation illustrates the significance and the prominence of the reader's presence. Amis's novel, then, disregards the boundaries and borders between the author and the reader. It, plainly, celebrates the involvement of a different view beneath the analysis of writing fiction or questioning the function of novelists.

Moreover, the novel sets forth the discrepancy between structure and theme; or form and content. These are vital concepts that the novel examines. It is the role of the reader to determine the meaning of Amis's juxtaposition. The novel celebrates the blanks, gaps and fragmentation which result in tumbling down the narrative authority. It denotes that the author is no longer able to dominate his work. In other words, it introduces the reader to a chaotic as well as messy narration patterns, and undermines the power of the author to take over the narrative. Accordingly, the thematical and structural levels contradict to give rise to more contradictions or perplexities. This contradiction stems from the fact that the novel's fragmented or cut- up discourse paves the way to examine the presence of the controlling force.

Besides, Sam's desires to be a successful writer and the potentials he makes so as to strengthen his stewardship and dominance over the novel run against the force of involving the reader in the narrating process. In other words, Amis relinquishes the hegemony of his author and strengthens his own authority at the expense of the reader who aspires and yearns to be the controlling force.

Furthermore, the beginnings of paragraphs require some efforts in order to link the different parts as well as to place the segments of the book in the correct order. The reader's task, then, is to fill in the gaps created by the discontinuity and the lack of consistency. One possible answer for using them is that they arouse the reader's imagination to make adequate connections and realise how these actions are to be placed. Waugh explains this loss of order by arguing that the modernist believed in "its recovery at a deeper level of the mind" (24). She, also, claims that the substantial assumption of the metafictional writers in writing a novel is similar to constructing "one's reality" (24). Consequently, the focus turns into "writing itself rather than consciousness" (Waugh 24).

The main attention of Amis's novel, however, is the writing process as well as the readers. Unexpectedly, the potentials of Amis's reader are frustrated and it is no more than what the reader realises from the loss of order, cut-up discourse and fragmented segments. The writer of *London Fields* is stretching and stating the power of his surrogate author, Asprey; he is illuminating the reader and character's aspiring to authority. Accordingly, the reader and even characters recognise that all their efforts were in vain.

To put it more simply, the novel's interest lies in the questions it raises about involvements of the reader and the writer. Sure enough, the reader is involved while blanks and gaps are left implicit for the reader to work out.

Yet, the use of italics and blanks indicates that Amis is creating a sense of confusion for the reader who cannot figure out whether the writer is stretching his control over the work, or he is definitely involved in the process of determining what the narrative lacks by filling in the gaps with different perspectives.

There are many examples where characters intend to leave kind of empty spaces to be topped up. On page 112, for instance, Nicola looks so engaged in her conversation with Keith. Soon after, Keith mentions his 'Jim Beam. Benedictine. *Porno*' which does not please Nicola; and she states surprisingly: "...*What?* [Amis's italics]" (Amis 113) with a blank in addition to the use of italics. Unexpectedly, the dialogue breaks off at Nicola's '*What?*', and the reader is left anxious to know what may happen next. Still later, the scene is repeated from Nicola's point of view, but this repetition provides more details:

Jack and the Beanstalk. How the young legs sped up into the purple tunic. And the impetuous, the life-loving smile!
'Jim Beam. Benedictine.*Porno.*'
'*What?*'
'*Porno.* It's this drink. You get it down the Golgotha. Or by the case from the bloke at BestSave. Dead cheap, cause it's been nicked *twice*.' [Amis's italics] (Amis 121)

This leads to the suspense's dismissal between the first scene and the second one. The reader has to continue reading in order to discover the completion of the first scene, or at least to find other character's point of view. It provides detailed information and results in the reader's loss of trust of what is written in the book. Again, it demonstrates and exhibits the failure of the author's control of his novel. Another example is the scene between Hope and Guy where she expresses her refusal of not leaving the beach:

I've found it, thought Guy (though the word wouldn't come, not yet). *It is .. . I've found it and it's . . . It is —*
'So?'
'Why don't we stay here? For a few days? The sea's nice,' he said, 'once you're in. Until we get the car fixed. It's interesting.' [Amis's italics] (Amis 22)

The evasive narration is subtly manifested and demonstrated in this scene. Also, it indicates fragmentation and the lack of communication between characters, namely depicting the sexual encounter between Nicola and Sam as well as between Guy and Hope.

The representation of these half-described scenes are pervaded by gaps which make the reader want more and need enough information that may help him link the paragraphs in the book.

On page 249, the copulation between Sam and Nicola is described by using 'that' or 'it', then the narrator adds "We put our clothes back on and went out walking, in the dripping alleys, the dark chambers of the elaborately suffering city" (Amis 148).

Moreover, the reader is surprised by another conversation between Nicola and Keith in the Gents:

'Keith, your shirt! It must have got a little creased in the car!'
She bent to straighten the ridged rayon. She bent lower.
'... On your knees, girl,' said Keith calmly. (Amis 242)

To fill in the blanks, the reader needs to reread the scene because, at the first glance, he may think that he would be provided with some detailed scenes which clarify what is going on between the characters. The scene is determined later by the comments of Trish, Keith's girlfriend, who saw what happened and talks to Guy about that:

'Why then? Why, Keith, why? Why's he rub my nose in it? With her.
In the *toilet*.'
'What, *here*? ... Yes, well, he does behave impulsively at times. 'On her knees.'
Still later, she talks about Nicola: 'I saw you. In the Gents. She was down on her fuckin knees in the Gents! For Keith. She was down on her knees *sucking his*-' (Amis 244)

Hence, the reader should continue reading till the end in order to put the segments of the story together. Accordingly, Waugh argues that the reader of the modernist text is "made aware of how reality is *subjectively* constructed [Waugh's italics]" while the reader of the contemporary text examines how it [reality] is itself *linguistically* constructed [Waugh's italics]" which exhilarate the reader to the idea that "not only do characters verbally construct their own realities; they are themselves verbal constructions, *words* not *beings*[Waugh's italics]" (26).

Waugh also claims that metafictional deconstruction has not only revealed and laid bare, to both novelists and readers, "the fundamental structures of narrative; it has also offered extremely accurate models for understanding the contemporary experience of the world as a construction, an artifice, a web of interdependent semiotic systems" (126). The writers of metafiction, then, provide disparate modes of representation that reflect the contemporary issues. They also reinforce the fact that writing fiction is no longer far from this portrayal and depiction. Thus, the reader plays a significant and substantial role in contributing to the deconstruction as well as the construction of the text.

Furthermore, integrating the reader indicates Mark Currie's claim that metafiction blurs the borderline between fiction and criticism (21), which expedite implicating the reader in deconstructing meaning. Currie distinguishes between ways different ways in which metafictional dramatise these boundaries. While the first case is the "allusion-breaking authorial intervention" (Currie 4), the second case is mainly "the integrated dramatisation of the external communication between author and reader" (Currie 4). Currie reinforces the fact that the novel, often, provides the self-commentary or the critical self-consciousness through the borderline between art and life. Novels where the characters act as surrogate authors as well as surrogate readers are examples of these cases. In this light, Currie illustrates the role of the surrogate reader by presenting Marlowe, the protagonist of Josef Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) arguing that:

Marlowe is a surrogate reader trying, as protagonist of the narrated journey to make sense of the events and to interpret its significance in a manner analogous to that of the external reader. The external readership is given further surrogate representation in the form of Marlowe's audience, his fellow sailors who listen to the narration from within the boundaries of the fiction yet alongside the external readership. This internal dramatization of the external relationship between Conrad and his readership allows complex articulations of self-consciousness and metafictional appropriations of readers' responses. (4)

Clearly, the quotation examines the role of the narrator as an external viewer who provides commentaries on the events. Marlowe is playing a significant role in introducing the viewpoints, thoughts and attitudes which the writer aspires the reader to have. Thus, this character voices some remarks as well as observations that allow the writer to manipulate the story according to readers' responses.

As far as *London Fields* is concerned, Amis employs his narrators to ask questions and pose issues the audience may debate. Accordingly, Sam can act as a surrogate reader who is trying to express the reader's point of view while he discusses the progress of his story. Like Marlowe's fellow sailors, Nicola, Guy and Keith talk to Sam over the narration of story.

Besides, Currie states that the second case is related to the narratives which signify their artificiality by obtrusive reference to traditional forms or borrow their thematic and structural principles from other narratives" (4). Obviously, *London Fields* depends on conventional and exhausted forms of literature for its self-consciousness. It, self-consciously and systematically, "signifies the artificiality of the fictional world while simultaneously offering its realistic referential possibilities" (4). Thus, this novel brings a special insight into the critical perspective on the relationship between art and life by integrating the readers' responses and perspectives.

III-5-Information- Gathering, Imitation and Media: The Reliable Narrator

London Fields is a pure example of metafiction in which the relation between narrators and narratives is highlighted. It poses questions about the unreliable information and information-gathering. Besides, some “metafictional novels present characters that are explicitly artist figures. They may be novelists writing novels” (Waugh 117). Accordingly, the novel introduces characters who provide metafictional comments since the craft of writing is a topic of interest for the writer.

Sam is supposed to depict actual events and then flavours them with little fiction. He claims: “I think I am less a novelist than a queasy cleric, taking down the minutes of real life. Technically speaking, I am also, I suppose, an accessory before the fact, but to hell with all that for now” (Amis 2), and again in Chapter 3, he asserts: “Now here’s pleasing symmetry. All three characters have given me something they’ve written. Keith’s brochure, Nicola’s diaries, Guy’s fiction” (Amis 27). He is not able to make things up and he needs life’s details of the other characters in order to come up with his fiction. Thus, he remarks, “Man, am I a reliable narrator” (Amis 49); and again he reinforces, “Boy, am I a reliable narrator” (Amis 103).

In addition, Rosen states that metafictionists think that the traditional mimetic fiction does not accurately represent reality. They “attempt the radical experiment of representing reality as they perceive it to be: contingent, subjective, and largely resistant to interpretation” (124). The metafictionists also show and manifest the techniques by which they create fiction. Besides, they endeavour to illustrate and clarify the “problem of documenting “reality,” as well as to reveal something about how ‘all our meaning systems are generated’” (Rosen 124).

Sam also points out the contemporary formlessness of reality stating:

Perhaps because of their addiction to form, writers always lag behind the contemporary formlessness. They write about an old reality, in a language that's even older. It's not the words: it's the rhythms of thought. In this sense all novels are historical novels. Not really a writer, maybe I see it clearer. But I do it too. An example: I still go on as if people felt well. (Amis 151)

The passage that is chosen to be the opening of the novel draws the reader's attention to the unreliability of the written information and information – gathering. Sam says: “What a gift. This page is briefly stained by my tears of gratitude. Novelists don't usually have it so good, do they, when something real happens (something unified, dramatic and pretty saleable), and they just write it down?” (Amis 1). The reader of this passage at the beginning of the book loses trust and confidence in writing because it creates a sense of anxiety as a result of the shocking materials that the novel shows. The false information and the unreliability of the author dominate the whole story and “[i]t doesn't matter what anyone writes any more. The time for it mattering has passed. The truth doesn't matter anymore and *is not wanted* [Amis's italics]” (Amis 288).

Sam is not depicted as a completely reliable narrator neither is he wholly unreliable. For instance, in his description of Enola, he repeats the same remark and commentary twice. This indicates that the reliability of the author is called into question. It points out the fact that the reader should make sure of the same information. Moreover, the novel shows different points of view of the same name. The first point of view introduces Enola from Nicola's description. She states that she is her friend when she was a child. The second point of view, however, is introduced by Sam who asserts that Enola is an imaginary person who does not exist at all. Still later, the third standpoint is formulated

by Guy who discovers that Enola is a name of the pilot who dropped Little Boy on Hiroshima. Eventually, he does not find this information till the closing pages of the novel.

Introducing Enola to readers thrice betokens that the narrator is foreshadowing from weighing any writer's words. It also indicates that these details are waste of information and may result in squandering the time of writing as well as reading since they are vital parts of the book. Putting it differently, it results directly from the novel's own sturdy assertiveness on being read closely and impulses the reader to be close till the end. The superfluous and dispensable illustrations are subtly shown and introduced in the novel which compels revisiting the same action twice or thrice. They also examine the necessity not to ratify what is written. What is needed to be added here is that Sam takes away himself and loses the reader's expectation to believe that Enola is nothing but a fictional character created by Nicola and not a real plane. Thus, Sam fails again to gain the readers' prospect and reliance on being a prosperous novelist. This reinforces his inability to control his narrative, fulfill and accomplish his role of writing a masterpiece that classifies him as an effective author. Besides, it creates other layers of narrators and highlights the fact there are more than one narrator in the book. Hence, it weakens Sam's supreme primacy to own the book.

What is worth mentioning is that Sam does not make any attempt to look for the words or to make sure of the exact meaning of Enola Gay. The typical writer does not hesitate to spend time searching for the significance of the information inserted in his work. In other words, he has to write things down as they happen and he does not spend any time for correction. The need for checking and finding out words' sense may result in an adequate and consistent production of art which reflects the performance of authors.

Furthermore, Sam announces on different pages that Guy rang Nicola at six o'clock (Amis 101) and at seven o'clock (Amis 148). Besides, Sam realises that he "must let things happen at the speed she [Nicola] picks" (Amis 26). He depicts himself "recuperating from Chapter 5" (Amis 49). He also argues that making things up is imposed on him and that he should remove any material that is considered improper or offensive from the text when it seems weaker or less effective. For instance, he expurgates a written passage, bowdlerise Marmaduke: "There's some stuff you just cannot put into books" (Amis 100), follow "Keith's thoughts where they wouldn't quite go" (Amis 184). On top of this, he brings out Missy Harter, his lost love, from his narrative for "reasons of balance. Reasons of space. She belongs to some other version [...] She didn't want artistic shape" (Amis 279).

Moreover, the novel represents Sam as the author who eventually draws from reality in some way and whose narrative is constructed through imitating aspects of people whom he lives with. In other words, he acts the role of a typical postmodernist who comments upon the process of writing and announces the self-consciousness as well as the self-reflexivity that metafiction underlines. What is needed to be added here is that the addresses of narrators to the readers are entirely metafictional because they indicate comments on the narration's process rather than the story which is eventually narrated. This highlights both the self-reflexivity and the awareness of the ontological status of fiction.

Besides, the traditional narrative's form is accommodated by the artistic representation of reality in modern times. Accordingly, the novel introduces TV as a source of information and the narrator asserts: "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 35).

It illustrates the way TV shapes everybody's life and especially Keith. People's life is portrayed through illustrating the impact of media on their thoughts and the way they perceive the world. For instance, representing the constant threat of the nuclear war, the fighting countries realise how influential media is. Thus, they agree on a policy of killing all the journalists. Sam comments on the effect of TV on society: "But TV came at Keith like it came at everybody else; and he had nothing whatever to keep it out. He couldn't grade or filter it" (Amis 35).

Keith is also portrayed as the main victim who considers "TV was real ... [Amis's ellipsis] Of course, some of it *was* real [Amis's italics]" (Amis 35). Commenting on the relationship between Guy and Nicola, the storyteller says: "But Keith did not know Guy. All he knew about Guy he got from TV" (Amis 70). This serves as a means to breakdown the distinction between high and low art. It also highlights how the influence of mass media and tabloids shapes fiction.

Furthermore, Keith "was very loyal to his tabloid, regarding its readers as one big family" (Amis 66). Since Sam imitates from Keith's brochure, and Keith himself is exposed and incurred to the leverage of media, the writing muse, then, is put under scrutiny. This indicates the mixture between low and high art and points out the influence of tabloids as well as media on writing literature. The writer, then, does not tune out whether his fiction is mingled by any other provenance or not. Hence, the reader elicits and educes that the information provided by the narrator is uncertain.

Another example that highlights Keith's reckoning and reliance on tabloids is when Sam refers to the sports monologue of Keith. When Keith replies to Guy's question about football game of the weekend, he uses a long passage. He uses a written language like

the tabloid's style. Sam frustrates the efforts made by the astonished and surprised reader to understand the happening events and argues:

I've heard many such summaries from him – of boxing matches, snooker matches, and of course darts matches. At first I thought he just memorized sections of the tabloid sports pages. Absolutely wrong. Remember – he is modern, modern, despite the heels and the flares. When Keith goes to a football match, that misery of stringer's clichés is *what he actually sees* [Amis's italics]. (Amis 61)

Furthermore, Keith acts out the role of Nicola's murderer. After the death of Sam, the reader discovers that the story told and narrated by Sam is not the whole truth and the information provided requires redaction or review. Keith is not the murderer and Nicola's actual killer is Sam himself.

Moreover, some scenes may create a sense of confusion and equivocation to the readers and betoken the failure of the writer to put forward the literary elements that manifest his writing skills. For example, the delivery of messages plays an important as well as a significant role to illustrate the way characters receive and pass information. Actually, it is communicatively based, but it frustrates the reader's attempt to follow the events and to trust the details provided by any character. The best example which examines this perplex is Keith's way of transmitting two messages from the character Nicola to Guy. When Nicola says to Keith: "Have you got all that? Are you sure? And for God's sake don't overdo it. Lay it on, but don't overdo it. And mention the globe" (Amis 112). The reader, in this moment, is left perplexed because he is not aware of the information that should be delivered by Keith to Guy.

Still later, Keith introduces the way he talked to Guy and delivered the message in the Black Cross: "Anyway she's definitely under the weather. Know what it looked like to me? Apaphy. Apaphy. Staring out of the window. Playing with that globe thing. Sad little

smile on its face.' Guy's head dropped another inch. 'Like —' Keith coughed and went on, 'like she was pining. Pining. Pining its little heart out . . . [Amis's ellipsis]' (Amis 114). Another time, Nicola tells Keith: "All right. See Guy tomorrow. Tell him this. Call me when it's done" (Amis 128). Surprisingly, Keith calls Nicola and asserts that he transmitted the important message to Guy. The reader is still unaware of what the message is about and he is left puzzled and muddled. After all, they start talking about Nicola: "I tell you who else ain't in the best of elph either. Neither" (Amis 139). Then, the storyteller describes the situation: "At the sound of her name... Guy felt something soft exploding in the transept of his chest. His head dropped and he reached out a hand for the bar. Nicola was suffering. This was heavenly news" (Amis 139).

Unexpectedly, the previous statements of Nicola are said again: "Sad little smile on its face. Like – like she was pining. Pining. Pining its little heart out ... [Amis's ellipsis]" (Amis 139). In other words, the first message was blurry and confounding while the delivery of the second message includes the statements of the first one.

III-6-Writing Difficulties in *London Fields*

The writer's block is prominent and outstanding in the novel. Also, Sam is suffering from both the inability to write and the difficulty to come up with his narrative. In this light, Diedrick claims that "Samson's twenty-year writer's block is Amis's way of saying that literature, too, is suffering from exhaustion" (130). Thus, it points out the never-ending of the artist to search for new and better ways to speak the unspeakable. It, then, shows how to write what has already been written. Besides, it manifests the claim of both Ihab Hassan and John Barth that literature suffers from silence and exhaustion. It also reinforces the potentials of the postmodernist writer to find new ways that allow him to write his novel.

Sam acts as a diarist and a scribe who records what he observes from his friends or from the events when they happen. Sam is not able to invent or to write and asserts: "to invent the bald facts of a life (for example) would be quite beyond my powers" (Amis 25). In fact, he depends on the characters' lives to flesh out the details of his story. His need for the character Nicola is not blurry to any reader. "I too have need of the Fast Forward," Sam says, "But I must let things happen at the speed she picks" (Amis 26).

As a postmodernist novel, its story is a metaphor of the writer's block and a piece that highlights the writer's view to his creation. In this light, Sam states: "Three days in and I am ready - I am ready to write. Hear my knuckles crack. Real life is coming along so fast that I can no longer delay. It's unbelievable. Two decades of fastidious torment, two decades of non-starting, and suddenly I'm ready" (Amis 2).

This breakthrough occurs in countless hours. Yet, Sam thinks that stretching his story's possibilities may also help him write "a really snappy little thriller" (Amis 2).

He also believes that he can turbocharge his powers of spontaneous creativity in the face of his problem.

In this light, the author Sam experiences a creative slowdown and starts writing after the loss of his ability to create new work. His situation ranges in the difficulty from coming up with original ideas to being unable to produce a work for years. The pressure illustrated by Sam's desire to produce a work, that can in itself contribute to the writer's block, provides comments on the narrative events and the self-referential remarks on whether Sam can struggle to shape the plot of his novel or not. Sam gets the inspiration from imitating other's productions. Hence, the novel deals more fully with the fictionality; it concerns a writer who is trying to overcome a writer's block.

For instance, Nicola discusses with Sam the advancement of the story which requires the character Guy to "go away for a while" (Amis 246). Sam's comment: "there go my unities" (Amis 247) indicates the unity of place that Sam thinks he should respectfully follow in order not to lose his last opportunity of writing a masterpiece.

Furthermore, Nicola asks Sam: "Do you really need Guy? Couldn't you just edit him out?" (Amis 75), and then he comments: "I felt I had to say this too. For a moment I also felt real alarm that she might accede. If she did, I was looking at a very grim novella" (Amis 75). Another way in which the postmodernist elements are seen is through the depiction of the characters. Nicola is far from the traditional protagonist. Hence, these quotations show that the characters know that they are part of fictional framework in which the writer Sam is discussing with them their roles and the appropriate time of each one to perform their roles. Sam replies: "I agree it's a drag in a way but I do need him. Keith can't go it alone. There's not enough in him. Of course it could be managed" (Amis 75).

In addition to that, he says: "I could have managed that on the first date. The time he followed me home I could have managed that. But what do you think I'm after? A "senseless killing"? Anyway events are moving now. I just let the next thing happen" (Amis 75). Simply put, this debate within the narrative and what the writer is offering to the readers differ from the conventional works of fiction, which are generally meant to be read as if they were eventually real. Sam gets stuck since he is not able to realise what to do next and also because he does not have adequate repertoire of choices that helps him to move beyond the limits of art production. This results in a sense of anxiety of various sorts as a source of the problem. Though, he was able to narrow the plot of the story and hit that stride, he could not move forward and remained in need for Nicola's support and suggestions. He sometimes contemplates how he embodies an attention deficit.

Moreover, the main characters are presented as authors. Sam, for instance, reveals the difficulty involved in writing a novel when Nicola spins the plot and deceives the characters Keith and Guy aiming at managing her own murder to make him want to kill her. Sam, however, accomplishes his own novel by standing in for both Guy and Keith. Before this act, Sam warns the reader, "I want to give up, I want to give up, it's a wicked book. It's a wicked thing I'm doing" (Amis 277).

This is the ethical parameter that reflects the difficulty of writing literature. In addition, Keith Talent faces difficulty with words in order to compose his diary, while Guy Clinch writes unpublished stories. These narrators struggle and find it an extremely hard task to come up with a paragraph, not to mention a novel. Sam sometimes moans and whines because of the challenges to write a little thriller, laying bare his struggles.

For example, he complains:

How I suffer for my art.

Midnight. I return in a state of rapture. I have an hysterical urge to burst right into Chapter 7, to write all night and beyond! (Amis 64)

In addition, his use of gaps and blanks while narrating show how hard progressing in narrating the story is. Hence, at the end fourth chapter that ends in Keith's 'Fuck', a long illustration and explanation followed this exit and a gap that should be filled in by the reader. Sam argues: "Now I had no choice but to end that chapter *right there*[Amis's *italics*]" (Amis 37). He also states: "Maybe I can go back later and soften the transition, if there's time. Keith's version couldn't be trusted for a second longer" (Amis 37). What is worth mentioning is that the gaps are filled differently because readers' perspectives and perception differ.

Moreover, Sam admits his failure in art. When he does not succeed to go to America and returns to the apartment of Asprey, he feels upset and develops depression which results in personal conflicts and disputes. It also results in the change of his writing's style where he starts to jump from one subject to another. He professes: "Six days I've been gone. I didn't write a word. The way I feel now I might never write another. But there's another. And another. I lost. I failed. I lost everything." (Amis 151). As the novel progresses, the life-threatening disease of Sam also influences his writing as it gets worse and worse. He, then, complains of his inability to write, emphasising an important metafictional device.

In addition to illustrating the difficulties of writing, the commentary indicates that Sam arranges the different parts of the novel; thus, he plays the role of a mediator between the characters. It also points out the efforts he makes so as to implement advancement of

his work. He struggles to know anything about the characters' meetings. This denotes the role of the narrator and his absence in the events he narrates.

Chaos and formlessness pervade his work; thus, he argues that "[t]he form itself is [his] enemy. All this damned romance. In fiction (rightly so called), people become coherent and intelligible – and they aren't like that" (Amis 152). His fictional world lacks coherence and consistency; it is, plainly, muddled. This stems from the fact that he is "less a novelist than a queasy cleric, taking down the minutes of real life. Technically speaking, [he is] also [...] an accessory before the fact, but to hell with all that for now" (Amis 2). This description highlights the emphasis on the fragmented narrative and discontinuous forms that Sam is trying to disregard his failure as a novelist. In this sense, the novel calls attention to its status as production of art.

III-7-Absurdity in *London Fields*: Towards Formulating Reality

There are likely few more vital issues for Amis's novel than the question of existence, a subject that has been covered in innumerable ways by postmodernist writers. The series of fragments that is found in this novel is a comment on what readers are doing as they read. Besides, it suggests that one of the more popular means for understanding this world is to see it through absurdity. The characters note absurdity through reality.

In addition, the characters reinforce the idea that absurdity is the only reality while the novel provokes more questions than it answers. In other words, answers may seem distant at best, and questions must always be pursued. This indicates that Amis's fictional world is motivated by the acceptance of the absurd.

From a practical standpoint, the characters seek meaning in the chaotic world and their attempt is completely futile. The absurdity results from their attempt to live a life of purpose and meaning in an indifferent universe full of ecological, astronomical and nuclear threats. Sam alerts readers about the forthcoming changes and states: "As is the case with the world situation, something will have to give, and give soon. It will all get a lot woollier, messier" (Amis 151). He also claims that "[e]verything is winding down, me, this, mother earth. More: the universe, though apparently roomy enough, is heading for heat death" (Amis 151).

Moreover, Amis, in his *The War Against Cliché*, illustrates and examines the depiction of alienation and loss which create a sense of absurdity by postmodernists. He also asserts the claim that self-awareness has led to realising the changes in modern society. Yet, he argues that "[t]he contemporary writer, therefore, must combine these

veins, calling on the strengths of the Victorian novel together with the alienations of post-modernism” (qtd. in. Childs 37).

Nicola, for instance, depends on herself rather than on any fixed human nature. She makes decisions and choices where the objective and absolute guides are absent. Furthermore, she is aware of her destiny and shows acceptance of what will happen to her. She, even, seeks her fate. This stems from the fact that individuals’ attempt to accept the absurdity of their lives and death. Sam displays a parody of a novelist as God of a murder story. He presents the murder to the reader in addition to providing details about her death. This indicates Camus’s call for awareness of death which may result in anxiety and contribute to a sense of absurdity¹.

Furthermore, the characters’ understanding of absurdity is best captured through illustrating loss and alienation. Absurdity requires self-aware and self-conscious individuals in order to figure out the situation. After all, the fictional characters are aware of their fictionality in Sam’s novel. On the top of this, Sam’s life indicates that he is also a fictional creation made by someone else. On the one hand, the novel highlights the characters’ self-consciousness of their fictionality in Sam’s work; on the other hand it examines the individuals’ self-awareness of their situation and fate. They know that they should accept the absurdity of life. Like death, man’s fate requires recognition as well as realisation of the inability to change it, but admit it.

Though the self-conscious fiction is not today’s invention, it has never been as diffuse as the present century. Thus, the characters’ self-awareness is a suggestive and revealing solution to the loss and the alienation which create a sense of absurdity, and also to the existential anguish which overlays the novel’s setting.

¹ For an insightful illustration, see Cornwell especially pages 5 and 115.

For instance, Sam's failure to make sense of the chaotic world results from his attempt to impress order on chaos. In this light, Waugh examines chaos and introduces the term 'frame' to define order. Frame means "construction, constitution, build; established order, plan, system... underlying support or essential substructure of anything [Waugh's ellipsis]" (Waugh 28).

However, foregrounding frames is problematic in contemporary metafiction because of its role to examine "frame procedures in the construction of the real world and of novels" (Waugh 28) which may separate fiction from reality. Accordingly, Waugh reinforces the fact that "contemporary metafiction draws attention to the fact that life, as well as novels, is constructed through frames, and that it is finally impossible to know where one frame ends and another begins" (29). She also asserts that convention in novels and frames in life are alike because the involvement in situations can plainly occur.

The importance of foregrounding frames in all fiction stems from the fact that "they become more perceptible as one moves from realist to modernist modes and are explicitly laid bare in metafiction" (Waugh 30). In order to present the function of literary conventions and revealing their provisional nature, writers show "what happens when they malfunction" (Waugh 31).

On that account, *London Fields* presents the chaotic vision of the world as well as novels and draws out "the paradoxical relationship of 'framed' and "'unframed' and, in effect, of 'form' and 'content'" (Waugh 31).

Besides, the absurdist novel is characterized by the excessive use of gaps, pauses and blanks. This use indicates the inability of the characters to understand the world of absurdity. With metafictional devices, the novel can illustrate both the lack of communication and fragmentation within the individual's discourse.

In other words, repetition, gaps and pauses are fundamental tenets of absurdist literature. Hence, writers usually employ them so as to enhance the representation of the postmodern condition. The subject matter is, then, style.

Moreover, coherence and consistency are dismissed at the expense of reinforcing the disconnection of scenes, dialogues as well as actions. The novel examines man's awareness of his position in the universe. It also provides readers with the writer's most intimate version of the human situation.

Moreover, Harris claims that "reality cannot be depicted" (128). He, also, suggests "disorder by mocking order" (129). Thus, their novels disregard the traditional norm that literature is a way to order reality and attempt to present the incongruity of the absurd world; yet, the writer "orders his materials in an "artistic" way" (25).

Waugh comes to a similar conclusion and asserts that the British self-conscious fiction "manages to suggest the fictionality of 'reality' without entirely abandoning realism" (49). In metafictional novels, then, the "final resolution can only be through either an awareness of the linguistic reality of the text itself or the acceptance of the existence of mutually exclusive realities or 'worlds'" (Waugh 103). In this light, *London Fields* asserts meaninglessness and examines the multiplicity of realities and truths in a chaotic world. It blurs the boundaries between art and life.

CONCLUSION

London Fields, self-consciously, calls attention to itself as a work of fiction. It also reveals Martin Amis's interest in the reader. Typically, it has been characterised by implying the role of the reader to participate in composing the novel. The style is self-consciously laying bare the fictionality of the work. This chapter, then, exhibits the metafictional tools that examine the relation between the reader, the text and the writer. Besides, the underlying feature in this chapter is the illustration of self-consciousness and self-awareness in this postmodernist narrative. The excessive use of pauses, repetition, and blanks which are the main features of the absurdist writing indicate the inability of the writer to come up with his work.

General Conclusion

The main interest of Martin Amis in his novel *London Fields* is to employ the irony and parody of form and to assert the fictionality of his narrative. His subject matter is not the struggle of individuals in life but the struggle of the writer to write fiction. Moreover, the writer subtly employs the different genres and styles to comment on the act of writing.

This playful use of genres refers to the exhaustion of literature that John Barth explains in his essay. Barth claims that the conventional modes of literary representation had been "used up," their possibilities consumed and overused. The postmodernist novel, then, does not imitate life; its role is to imitate the old styles, forms and genres. It asserts that there are no new ideas left in the world, and no new ways to present the ideas that have already existed. Accordingly, this research has reinforced that Amis's novel questions the originality and authority of authors as the latter is struggling with the idea that there is nothing to write what has already been written. Hence, it indicates Barth's claim of the imitation of another mimic work.

Moreover, Amis's use of the death of love allows him to skillfully lay bare the fictionality of fiction. On the one hand, the death of love indicates Amis's depressing and absurd view of his fictional world; on the other hand, it offers an ironic remark on the writing of the romance story.

Furthermore, *London Fields* is an input and a commentary on the conventional norms of the love story, the apocalyptic novel, the murder story and thrillers. Actually, the writer uses the multiplicity of genres to blur the line between fiction and reality; and to lay bare the borderline between art and life.

In addition, the novel is principally concerned with the ways art has been kept alive in the age that flops between the death of love, the death of God and the death of the author. It explains the correlation between the novelist's authority, and his plot in fiction; and God's supremacy, and his plot in life. Yet, it undermines their ability to dominate or spread power.

The novel also examines the apocalyptic features which point out the absurdity of the world where the characters live. In other words, these characteristics serve as a means to demonstrate the metafictional devices as well as the sense of absurdity. The relevance of representing such aspects is to offer commentaries on the imitation of traditional apocalyptic novels and assert the multiplicity of the literary forms.

Besides, absurdity is shown and exhibited through depicting violence, alienation and loss. *London Fields* introduces crimes, suicide, corruption and stealing. It reinforces the fact that everyone is exposed to be corrupt; writers can be professional counterfeiters and cheaters as well.

These ideas, being the subject of John Barth's essay, have given rise to the link between two important issues which are individual's position in the world, the author's position and the characters' situation in literature. Amis's use of these aspects expose the relationships among the text, the author and the reader; and perhaps, by doing so, creating a new relationship in which the author and reader are aware of the socially determined discourses of behaviour and thought.

In this light, parody of form is directly related to Barth's explanation of the exhaustion of literary forms as well as materials, because his claim asserts that texts

always refer to, and depend upon, previous genres or works. Thus, this work can be figured out only as far as works of the genres, that came before, are understood.

Furthermore, the repetition of the same scene and providing the reader with two disparate versions of information, about the same subject, indicate the unreliability of the characters that transmit ideas. The reader, then, has to glue the borrowed pieces together to bind and join the fragmented ideas.

Moreover, the study has illustrated the significance of self-consciousness in identifying the multiplicity of realities and truths in the postmodernist novel. In other words, *London Fields* compels the self-conscious reader to question and examine the process of making fiction by employing its own elements. This use points out Ihab Hassan's indication of the self-denial literature and Patricia Waugh's comprehensive examination of the self-conscious fiction.

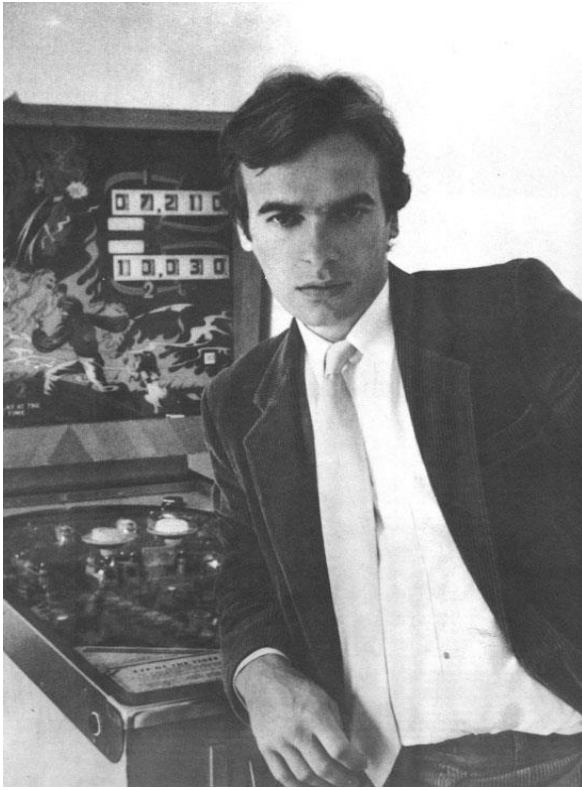
Besides, the novel compels the reader to fill in the gaps or the blanks in addition to linking the repetitive scenes. In this way, the narrative undermines the authority of the narrator. It, as well, elucidates that the self-conscious characters are not only readers of the story but also the writers of the plot. Putting it differently, compelling the reader to observe the process of making fiction, the author is forcing reflexive awareness of the language's indication in society.

In other words, *London Fields* blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality in addition to examining the self-conscious style, the self-conscious characters and the self-conscious reader. Though the reader is allowed to participate in filling in the blanks and gaps of the work, his potentials to have the supreme authority are frustrated.

Metafiction and absurdity are put together in order to highlight the inability of the writer to invent and create. The acts create a sense of absurdity and highlight the meaninglessness of life. Thus, art, and literature in particular, can no longer achieve or create meaning in a chaotic world. The narrative instability is itself an indication to the instable world. This research reinforces the idea that meaninglessness in art points out meaninglessness in life in Amis's novel where boundaries between fiction and reality are laid bare. It, also, suggests that the characters' awareness of their fictionality is similar to the individuals' awareness of their existential situation; and the paradox of art is similar to the paradox of life.

This research has raised many questions in need of further investigation. It is recommended that further research should be undertaken in other contemporary themes and devices. On a wider level, research is needed to determine the significance of Amis's playfulness in *London Fields*. Further work needs to be performed to establish all of Amis's literary works.

Appendices



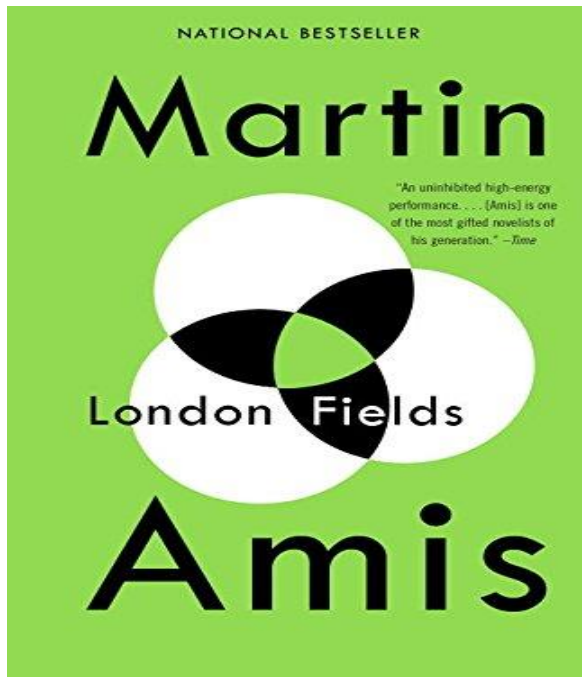
Appendix 1: Martin Amis' s Biography

Martin Amis, the son of the writer Kingsley Amis, was born in Oxford in 1949. He was educated in schools in Britain, Spain and the USA, and then graduated from Exeter College, Oxford, with First Class Honours in English.

His best-known novels are *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), *The Information* (1995) and *Time's*

Arrow (1991), was shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction. His first novel, *The Rachel Papers*, however, was written in 1973 and won a Somerset Maugham Award in 1974. Besides, he is categorised with the generation of British-based novelists which includes Julian Barnes and Ian McEwan and came into light in 1980s. Many critics were interested in examining his works including Brian Finney, Susan Brook and James Diedrick. Moreover, his works touch upon the contemporary world's issues.

(See <http://www.martinamisweb.com>)



Appendix 2: Synopsis of *London Fields*

London Fields, set in contemporary London, is a metafictional narrative which self-consciously and self-reflexively lays bare its fictionality. The story is narrated by Samson Young (Sam), a young American writer who visits London and writes his first novel. He depends on observing his friends in order to incorporate them into his

novel, as he lacks courage and imagination he requires to write fiction. He is an unreliable narrator, a failed non-fiction writer with 'two decades of non-starting' (Amis 5), i. e. Suffering from a writer's block and is slowly dying of some sort of terminal illness. Nicola Six is a highly erotic and intelligent female protagonist. She is a mysterious character and a murderess who is searching for something and someone: her murderer, '[i]t's what she always wanted' (Amis 4). She is aware of the time, the place, the means and the manner in which she will be killed. Actually, she believes she will be murdered on her thirty-fifth birthday, which will occur on November 6. In order to create a conceivable and adequate story, Sam recognises that he can simply follow the progress towards the murder from copies of Nicola's diaries or he can directly record from life. Thus, Nicola is regularly interviewed and her story is updated on the plot. Keith Talent, the bad guy and the known criminal, is pretended to be the murderer in Sam's story and to kill Nicola Six, with Guy Clinch as the fall guy necessary to provoke him into doing it. In the end, Sam, her murderer, dispatches her in the front seat of his car on November 6, exactly as she predicted. (See <http://www.martinamisweb.com>)

Appendix 3: An interview with Martin Amis about *London Fields*

INTERVIEWER

How important is plot to you?

AMIS

Plots really matter only in thrillers. In mainstream writing the plot is—what is it? A hook. The reader is going to wonder how things turn out. In this respect, *Money* was a much more difficult book to write than *London Fields* because it is essentially a plotless novel. It is what I would call a *voice* novel. If the voice doesn't work you're screwed. *Money* was only one voice, whereas *London Fields* was four voices. The eggs weren't in one basket. They were in four baskets. I was fairly confident that the hook, this idea of a woman arranging her own murder, pricked the curiosity. So although nothing much happens in five hundred pages, people are still going to want to know how it ends. It's a *tease* novel, in that respect.

INTERVIEWER

Did you read or hear somewhere that certain people were predisposed to being murdered?

AMIS

Yes. I can't even remember when the idea or the scratch on the mind occurred. It wasn't even a book I read; it was a book review I read or heard about, or a conversation I listened to in a pub or a tube train. Anyway, all I needed was one sentence, which was the sentence

you just outlined. And at that point I was thinking in terms of a very short novel, about the murderer and the murderess and their eventual conjunction. Then the introduction of a third character, Guy, the foil, opened the novel out into a broader kind of society, and then the narrator had his own demands for space to be met. And finally, time and place took over, i.e., London, a modern city at the end of the century, at the end of the millennium. That brought together all kinds of interests and preoccupations. Again, it must be stressed that you don't have your themes tacked up on the wall like a target, or like a dartboard. When people ask, What did you mean to say with this novel? The answer to the question is, of course, The *novel*, all four hundred and seventy pages of it. Not any catchphrase that you could print on a badge or a T-shirt. It's a human failing to reduce things either to a slogan or a personality, but I seem to have laid myself open to this—the personality getting in the way of the novel.

This interview is taken from <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/1156/the-art-of-fiction-no-151-martin-amis>. (See also <http://www.martinamisweb.com/interviews.shtml>

Interviewed by Francesca Riviere for The Paris Review, Spring 1998).

Glossary

<i>Glossary Term</i>	<i>Glossary Definition</i>
Angst /aŋst/	[T]he German word for 'anxiety' or 'dread', used by the philosophers of *EXISTENTIALISM—notably the Danish theologian Søren Kierkegaard in <i>Begrebet Angst (The Concept of Dread</i> , 1844)—to denote a state of anguish that we feel as we are confronted by the burden of our freedom and the accompanying responsibility to impose values and meanings on an *ABSURD universe (Baldick 12).
Deconstruction	[A] philosophically sceptical approach to the possibility of coherent meaning in language, initiated by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida in a series of works published in 1967 (later translated as <i>Speech and Phenomena</i> , <i>Of Grammatology</i> , and <i>Writing and Difference</i>), and adopted by several leading literary critics in the United States—notably at Yale University—from the early 1970s onwards [...] Derrida's concepts to critical questions of interpretation, tending to challenge the status of the author's intention or of the external world as a source of meaning in texts, and questioning the boundary between criticism and literature (Baldick 59- 61)
Metalepsis	In narratology, metalepsis is a breaking of the boundaries that separate distinct 'levels' of a narrative, usually between an *EMBEDDED tale and its *FRAME STORY (<i>see</i> diegesis). An example occurs in Chaucer's <i>Merchant's Tale</i> , when a fictional character within the tale told by the Merchant refers to the Wife of Bath, who should be unknown to him since she exists on another level as one of the pilgrims listening to the Merchant. Narrative metalepsis, sometimes called 'frame-breaking', has become common in modern experimental fiction (Baldick 153).
Polyphonic	[A] polyphonic novel is one in which several different voices or points of view interact on more or less equal terms. The term polyphonic prose has been applied to a kind of * FREE VERSE printed as if it were prose and showing similarities to the *PROSE POEM, as in Amy Lowell's <i>Can Grande's Castle</i> (1918). <i>Noun</i> : polyphony (Baldick 199).

Post-structuralism	[A] school of thought that emerged partly from within French *STRUCTURALISM in the 1960s, reacting against structuralist pretensions to scientific objectivity and comprehensiveness. The term covers the philosophical *DECONSTRUCTION practised by Jacques Derrida and his followers, along with the later works of the critic Roland Barthes, the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, the historical critiques of Michel Foucault, and the cultural-political writings of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze. These thinkers emphasized the instability of meanings and of intellectual categories (including that of the human 'subject'), and sought to undermine any theoretical system that claimed to have universal validity—such claims being denounced as 'totalitarian' (Baldick 202).
Reader-response criticism	a general term for those kinds of modern *CRITICISM and literary theory that focus on the responses of readers to literary works, rather than on the works themselves considered as self contained entities[...] Important contributions to this debate include Wolfgang Iser's <i>The Act of Reading</i> (1978), which sees readers as 'actualizing' texts by filling in their 'gaps' or *INDETERMINACIES of meaning, and Stanley Fish's <i>Is There a Text in this Class?</i> (1980), which gives the reader an even more active role as the text's true producer. A somewhat distinct line of historical investigation is represented by the *RECEPTION THEORY of Hans Robert Jauss (Baldick 212).

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