

Martin Amis murder mystery to be directed by Shekhar Kapur

London Fields, which centres on a woman who arranges her death, to be helmed by Indian director of Elizabeth

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Martin Amis's books have not had an easy relationship with the cinema. Photograph: David Levenson/Getty Images

Despite his often-professed love for cinema, film versions of Martin Amis novels have had a difficult history. The movie of *Money* never materialised, ending up as a TV series instead; *Dead Babies* and *The Rachel Papers* were both derided on release, and the *London Fields* adaptation has been in limbo for more than a decade.

But, with a new director on board, it looks as though a cinematic version of *London Fields* could be on the cards. Speaking to the Hollywood Reporter website at the Film Bazaar in Goa, a market backed by the Indian government, Shekhar Kapur, the director of *Bandit Queen*, said: "I'm looking forward to this project because I've never directed a murder mystery."

London Fields, published in 1989, centres on the ambiguous figure of Nicola Six, the "murderee" who apparently foresees her death and sets out to arrange it. Despite its place as a key novel in Amis's oeuvre, it was denied a place on the 1989 Booker prize shortlist after some of the judges objected to what had been viewed by some as misogyny.

An adaptation has been planned at least since 2000, when Britain's Tartan Films and the US's Muse Productions jointly acquired the rights. Now it appears Tartan is no longer involved.

Kapur, who directed *Elizabeth* and the remake of *The Four Feathers*, follows in the footsteps of several major directors who have been associated with the project, including David Cronenberg, Michael Winterbottom and David Mackenzie. But, like a proposed

adaptation of Amis' 1985 novel *Money* starring Gary Oldman, no film has yet materialised. Last year it was announced that Gemma Arterton had been pencilled in to play Nicola Six – but that was for *Winterbottom*, and she is no longer lined up for the role.

Another question is the extent of Amis's involvement in the film.

He is known to have become disenchanted with the film-making process, telling the *Guardian* in 2001, when the *Dead Babies* adaptation was released: "I wouldn't dream of writing a script from my own stuff ... I think you're just making trouble for yourself if you get too involved in all these things."

Apart from the chequered history of cinematic adaptations of his novels, Amis completed a script for the flop 1980 science fiction film *Saturn 3*, starring Kirk Douglas, Farrah Fawcett and Harvey Keitel (and which provided him considerable material for his novel *Money*), and worked on rewrites for *Mars Attacks!*, before Tim Burton's involvement.

As a 15-year-old, he had a small role in the adventure movie *A High Wind in Jamaica*, directed by Alexander Mackendrick.

However in 2008 it was reported he was working on a screenplay for *London Fields* with one of the American producers still involved with the project, Roberta Hanley. It is not known if he plans to continue with the script.

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