

The Amises on Realism and Postmodernism:

*Stanley and the Women* (1984) and *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984)

By Gavin Keulks

When viewed as companion texts, or contemporaneous instances of revaluative critique, Kingsley Amis's fifteenth novel, *Stanley and the Women*, and Martin's fifth novel, *Money: A Suicide Note* illuminate two subjects hitherto unexamined in the Amis *père et fils* relationship: the Amises' perspectives on postmodernism and their controversial portraits of women. Whereas *Lucky Jim* and *The Rachel Papers* situated the Amises in relation to their divergent forms of comedy, and whereas *Ending Up* and *Dead Babies* positioned them in relation to their satiric differences, *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* extended their confrontations into new generic territory, interrogating their opinions about the evolution of postmodernism and realism. A novel that explicitly rejects all forms of literary fabulation, Kingsley's *Stanley and the Women* declares the validity of classically realistic protocol. A forum for Martin's postmodernist leanings, *Money* subverts the narrative assumptions that inform Kingsley's more traditional brand of social realism. Both novels, however, confront variations of literary tradition and patriarchy: one that is socio-political in nature, concerned with distinctions between patriarchy and misogyny, and one that is generic, or modal, concerned with the modal transformations within realism. While the Amises' writings continued to reflect their engagement in a covert literary war, their dual 1984 texts featured an additional dynamic: whereas previous novels revealed Martin's dedication to reworking his father's texts and his literary authority, by 1984, Martin's career had begun to eclipse his father's. As a consequence, *Stanley and the Women* can be seen as an instance of paternal, not filial, revaluation, as Kingsley's novel indirectly

addressed, reworked, and displaced Martin's postmodern techniques and themes, which had become decidedly more famous.

Until the late 1970s, critics and readers alike could agree about the qualities of Kingsley's work: raucous, sometimes dark, comic satire; controversially iconoclastic heroes; a firmly centered moral consciousness; the triumph of common sense over pretension or hypocrisy; an expert stylistic precision; and a conflation of the high with the low, producing an eminently readable, comically engaging presentation. By 1978, however, such critical consensus had become difficult to reach. When Martin released *Money* to great critical acclaim, there seemed little doubt about which Amis's career was in ascendancy. Unfortunately for Kingsley, Martin had become the shining star in the Amis family galaxy, and consequently, issues of influence began to reverse their earlier direction, extending now from son to father. Two main factors contributed to the Amises' shifting reputations: stated generally, these were controversial charges of male chauvinism and the Amises' positions within contemporary literary debates, especially the future of realism and postmodernism. Not surprisingly, these were the chief dynamics that animated the Amises' *Stanley and the Women* and *Money*, and for the first time, their literary quarrels could be witnessed concurrently, as both novels were published in 1984.<sup>1</sup>

### Chauvinism, Feminism, and Misogyny

Few authors in England or America have rivaled the Amises' abilities to inflame gender controversy. As have other authors before them -- Hemingway, Mailer, Roth, Larkin, Lawrence, to name but a few -- the Amises both write from a decidedly male perspective. They are particularly masculinist authors whose works challenge genteel assumptions about morality and

character. In many respects, gender relations were always Kingsley's grand theme but his less reserved, often blatantly honest, depictions of women differentiated him from his contemporaries. Similar to his father, albeit with different methods, Martin is archeologist of shifting sensibilities, a diagnostician of contemporary social mores who refuses to temper his dark treatments of modern decay, whether they occur within men or women. Of course, both Amises wrote during some of the most politicized decades in the late twentieth century, complicating matters.

As do most good writers, the Amises fictionally incorporate the social issues of their time, assimilating them to illuminate complexities and contradictions. If previous works depicted the Amises engaged in a struggle over the nature of modern reality, then *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* elevated gender relations to a primary status within their social and literary debates. Because questions of chauvinism (or misogyny) are so central to each author's critical reception, the subject deserves extended treatment. However, these issues are best seen in the context of the Amises' literary negotiations, especially their deliberations over character, aesthetic distance, and realism. As analysis of *Money* will reveal, Martin enacts narrative measures to distance himself from his controversial protagonists. Kingsley, however, does not, embracing a form of moral realism that is less fabulistic, less involuted than Martin's more experimental brand. In many ways, these technical differences help contextualize the charges of chauvinism that encircle the Amises' work. As one will see, however, *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* both present difficult problems of sympathy, which problematize the dismissal of such charges.

In contrast to literary conventions, both romantic and comic, Kingsley's later work, (beginning with *Jake's Thing* in 1978), began to portray women as self-interested and spiteful,

vindictive and mean. Of course, he had portrayed men in the same light for years, beginning with *Lucky Jim*, but with the exception of Jim's uncharitable "Filthy Mozart" remark, no one had seemed to mind all that much. By the late 1970s, however, Kingsley found himself once more at the wrong end of the political spectrum, charged with another version of militant philistinism: a gleeful chauvinism, or more seriously, a misogynist eagerness to endorse the attitudes of his embittered male protagonists. To an increasing number of readers, including Martin himself, Kingsley's humor on this issue had ceased to be funny. Lamentably, he seemed to have let personal prejudice taint his work, imbuing his disillusioned heroes with intonations of his own failed marriages. As did Kingsley, Martin never shied from questioning convention, especially when it came to literature. In his earlier novels, he surpassed his father's stylistic propriety, affording readers an honest (and often sometimes disturbing) glimpse into his characters' private thoughts and sexual escapades. Moreover, in a mature work of fiction such as *Money*, Martin overturned many romantic and comic conventions, tricking misinformed readers into confusing John Self's narratorial perversions with Martin's authorial endorsement. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic worked valiantly to re-classify the Amises' novels as misanthropic (instead of misogynist), but questions about the Amises' attitudes towards their female characters continued to expand, repudiating the convenience of the misanthropy tag.

It would be easy to gloss over such issues, accepting the exemption misanthropy affords, but the topic is so central to each author's fiction that it should not be so simply ignored. Few novels interrogate these issues as aggressively as do Martin's *Money* and Kingsley's *Jake's Thing* and *Stanley and the Women*, and not surprisingly, they are among the most frequently cited instances of the Amises' alleged misogyny. One tonal development is notable, however, within these three works: whereas Kingsley and Martin are both concerned with reworking

conventional depictions of their female characters, Martin's novel achieves a narrative distance and humor that Kingsley's two works do not. For the first time in their familial competition, Kingsley's representations of modern reality seemed spurious at best or patently false, something that Martin had previously noted and worked to displace. Whereas Martin had earlier reevaluated his father's efforts, now, unfortunately, literary tradition began to do so as well, much as both Amises had witnessed with Larkin.

The Autobiographical Abyss: *Jake's Thing* and *Stanley and the Women*

As John McDermott has noted, one can locate in Kingsley's earliest novels many "portraits of unlovely ladies." Margaret Peel springs first to mind (*Lucky Jim*), followed by Elizabeth Gruffydd-Williams (*That Uncertain Feeling*), Anna le Page (*Take A Girl Like You*), and Helene Bang (*One Fat Englishman*). Often, these women win and then subsequently lose the affections of the primary male lead; at least that is the case with Margaret and Elizabeth. Standing opposite them, as correctives perhaps, one finds such women as Christine Callaghan, Jean Lewis, and Jenny Bunn, superior for their beauty, charm, and good-heartedness. These women are portrayed as better than men, more serious and intuitive. They hold out the promise of a safe harbor, a respite from chaos. In this respect, they symbolically rescue the Amis man, "protecting him from himself."<sup>2</sup> In Kingsley's early imaginative worlds, nice things (or nice women) were always nicer than nasty ones, and readers had little trouble distinguishing between the categories.

Beginning with *Jake's Thing* (1978), however, many readers marked a disturbing change in Kingsley's *dramatis personae*. A stark, un-romanticized portrait of flagging desire and a

faltering marriage, *Jake's Thing* depicts the battle between the sexes as interminable trench warfare, bereft of respite or release. A possible parodic inversion of Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, *Jake's Thing* disavowed many of the values that Kingsley's earlier novels championed. Marriage, love, or lust no longer furnished transcendent escape from the self; rather, they now seemed to hound Jake Richardson, the novel's protagonist, sending him scurrying into the squirrel-cage of psychoanalysts, doctors, and sexual exams. Whereas earlier novels like *Take a Girl Like You* presented some resolution to the issue of sexual conflict, albeit qualified or troubling, *Jake's Thing* seemed to leave little doubt about Kingsley's increasingly dark comic vision.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, the novel's final paragraphs are illuminating. Contemplating the social implications of the medical procedures that could restore his sex-drive, Jake assesses his relationships with women. He arrives at a final conclusion, simultaneously humorous and bleak:

Jake did a quick run-through of women in his mind, not of the ones he had known or dealt with in the past few months or years so much as all of them: their concern with the surface of things, with objects and appearances, with their surroundings and how they looked and sounded in them, with seeming to be better and to be right while getting everything wrong, their automatic assumption of the role of injured party in any clash of wills, their certainty that a view is the more credible and useful for the fact that they hold it, their use of misunderstanding and misrepresentation as weapons of debate, their selective sensitivity to tones of voice, their unawareness of the difference in themselves between sincerity and insincerity, their interest in importance (together with noticeable inability to discriminate in that sphere), their fondness for general conversation and directionless discussion, their pre-emption of the major share of feeling, their exaggerated

estimate of their own plausibility, their never listening and lots of other things like that, all according to him.

So it was quite easy. “No thanks,” he said.<sup>4</sup>

Many of Kingsley’s traditional targets for deflation appear prominently in Jake’s thoughts, chief among them hypocrisy, affectation, and egotism. However, as Malcolm Bradbury noted, this new intonation seemed somehow unsettling coming from a writer who had previously “celebrated women as nicer than men and who had made the commonplace world of sexual relations the basis of a moral feeling.” A reincarnated, older Jim Dixon, Jake Richardson uncomfortably endorses renunciation and surrender, a retreat from humor and laughter, a flight from life. To many readers, including Martin and Jane, it seemed that Kingsley’s authorial sense had become tainted by prejudice, and although acquiescence does not equal misogyny *per se*, Kingsley’s comedy seemed to exceed the borders of playful chauvinism.<sup>5</sup>

Similar to *Jake’s Thing*, *Stanley and the Women* is a forceful yet flawed portrait of a marriage in turmoil, recounted from the male perspective and accompanied by all the confusion, ambivalence, and irritation one might logically expect from the dramatic situation. On the surface, the novel’s primary subject is madness, not gender conflict, and this point gave Kingsley pause about the title.<sup>6</sup> The book’s instigating action is the unexpected homecoming of Stanley’s son, Steve, the frazzled prodigal, which will gradually disrupt Stanley’s marriage. To some critics and reviewers, however, it seemed that the novel’s real subject was not madness or even family disintegration, but instead the socio-sexual mores that had begun to displace members of Kingsley’s generation.

Writing in the 1 September 1985, issue of the *Washington Post Book World*, Jonathan Yardley announced that Kingsley appeared to have “stacked the deck against women, reducing

them to caricatures who reinforce the damning judgments made by Stanley and his chums.” Elsewhere, Val Hennessy noted that the book was clearly written by “someone who harbours a pathological hatred of women.” As Christopher Hitchens explains, such controversy almost prevented the novel from finding an American publisher: although senior editors at four different publishing houses initially expressed enthusiasm for the novel, all eventually rescinded their offers, offering no explanation. Jonathan Clowes, Amis’s literary agent at the time, attributes these rejections to social-political pressures, noting that he knew of at least one instance where the novel had been railroaded by feminist readers on editorial boards.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, *Stanley and the Women* would find publication with Summit Books, vindicating its English appearance, but by then it had become patently clear that Kingsley was again embroiled in a heated literary and political battle. In contrast to his experiences with *Lucky Jim* thirty years earlier, however, Kingsley found the stakes were much higher in the hyper-politicized 1980s. Whereas he had earlier been arraigned for expressing a “militant philistinism” that angered the figureheads of an older generation, Kingsley now found himself anathema to the young, as he teetered between publication and censure.

As with *Jake’s Thing*, Kingsley tried to remind readers that Stanley was not a thinly-veiled author-surrogate and that “all comedy, all humor is unfair.” He certainly did not deny that the novel proposed a critical view of women, but for him it remained a work of literature, not sociology: it was not reportage, autobiography, or confession. Instead, he drew attention to the novel’s realism and verisimilitude, noting that if any novel were to be any good, it would dramatize “thoughts that some people, somewhere, have had.” Anthony Burgess also contributed to the debate, noting that all writers, to varying extents, utilize their personal lives as source material, and that none of the “stern stuff” in *Stanley and the Women* should be read as



“coming straight from the mouth of Mr Amis.”<sup>8</sup> There was, of course, some ironic justice to Kingsley’s situation, which paralleled Vladimir Nabokov’s, who was similarly asked to defend *Lolita* for its social and moral transgressions in the 1950s. Earlier, Kingsley had refused to grant Nabokov aesthetic distance from his narrator. Now, critics refused to grant Kingsley the same separation from his text, noting that Stanley’s problems with women seemed uncomfortably autobiographical and that Kingsley’s perspective lacked objectivity.

The distance between Kingsley and his beleaguered narrators has always been difficult to measure, but this issue is complicated by the unique historical circumstances surrounding the publication of the *Stanley and the Women*. As Eric Jacobs, Richard Bradford, and Martin Amis himself remind us, there exist very good reasons for associating Kingsley with Stanley Duke. The most relevant event that occurred during the composition of *Stanley and the Women* was the dissolution of Kingsley’s marriage to Elizabeth Jane Howard, a messy process that soured him on women.<sup>9</sup> Separated since 1980, the Amises made their divorce final in 1983, as Kingsley was completing the novel. While the controversy over the book raged, Jane excoriated Kingsley in the press, accosting him for ruining both her life and career. Kingsley retaliated with counter-accusations, and the two settled more deeply into their entrenched opinions. Not surprisingly, this is precisely the pattern that *Stanley and the Women* depicts: the descent from mutuality, sympathy, and objectivity to myopia, vested interest, and entrenchment.

Drawing from Kingsley’s correspondence, Jacobs and Bradford record the extent to which Kingsley repaid his ex-wife by fictionalizing her as the novel’s more intractable females. She became the foundation for Nowell Hutchinson, Stanley’s first wife, as well as for Susan Duke, Stanley’s second. Kingsley had previously discussed the psychic mysteries of his character-creations in a 1973 essay, “Real and Made-up People,” but by 1984, many people

noted important theoretical divergences. Whereas Kingsley had earlier contended that characters functioned for authors as vehicles for self-criticism, helping them to “see more clearly, and judge more harshly, [their] own weaknesses and follies,” in *Stanley and the Women*, all attempts at self-criticism seemed faltering, displaced, or blocked. Authorial approval seemed heavily invested in Stanley, however untenable. Hardly a stranger to these familial contexts, Martin himself commented in *Experience* upon the romantic malaise of his father’s work during this period: “It was evident in his novels – specifically in the anti-romantic curve leading from *Jake’s Thing* to *Stanley*, which appeared to cancel any hope or even memory of comfort from that quarter. I wasn’t making the elementary error of conflating the man and the work, but all writers know that the truth *is* in the fiction. That’s where the spiritual thermometer gives its reading. And Kingsley’s novels, around then, seemed to me to in moral retreat, as if he were closing down a whole dimension – the one that contained women and love.”<sup>10</sup> This tendency towards vested interest achieves a noticeable urgency at the novel’s end.

For most of the novel, Kingsley portrays Stanley Duke as a basically decent individual who treads a fine line between chauvinism and commonsense. He is fallible and limited, but at least preliminarily, it is possible to view him as the archetypal Kingsley Amis figure -- the “shit-hero,” the “hero-as-shit.” Until the final pages of the book, Stanley is far from a repulsive character. He displays an admirable tendency to adhere to a rational, centrist perspective, restraining himself from the pronounced sexism of other characters. Instead, Cliff Wainwright and Dr. Nash present the most troubling examples of male chauvinism in the book; likewise, Nowell Hutchinson, Susan Duke, and Lindsey Collins fails to confirm the judiciousness of female charity. In their own ways, these characters all antagonize Stanley, and the novel depicts him wandering between their varying levels of bitterness and self-interest. The problem,

however, stems from the novel's ending, where Kingsley seems to undercut the tonal moderation that elsewhere supports the book's comic realism.

The novel deftly depicts Stanley's process of enlightenment with regard to the personal conflicts between his son and his second wife. For most of the novel, Stanley functions as a satiric commentator, reflecting upon the self-serving stances of the other characters but refusing to adopt their prejudicial attitudes. Like many other Kingsley Amis novels, *Stanley and the Women* adopts a middleground and middlebrow position. The novel's ending, however, complicates such a reading, as it appears to validate the biased opinions of the characters Stanley (and Kingsley) seemed earlier intent on deflating. In the novel's final pages, Kingsley works to prepare the reader for Stanley's unsteady conversion, leading him through two crucial dialogues, one with Dr. Nash, a physician, the other with Cliff Wainwright, one of Stanley's divorced friends. In a passage reminiscent of Jake Richardson's celebrated renunciation of women, Dr. Nash describes how Lindsey Collins, the novel's feminist physician, blames Stanley for his son's madness, acting solely out of malice and self-interest. Beginning with this scene, Kingsley seems to abdicate his novel's middle-ground perspective, striving instead towards the premise of the book's title, which portrays women as a separate and potentially antagonistic species from men.

Referring to the differences between Stanley and his women, Dr. Nash remarks that Lindsey Collins had never cared about Steve's recovery or about Stanley's efforts to help; instead, she intended all along to "fuck [Stanley] up because [he was] a man." At this point, Stanley objects, revealing his non-prejudicial, middleground position, but Nash unleashes a diatribe of striking proportions:

Fucking up a man? Not enough of a motive? What are you talking about? Good God,

you've had wives, haven't you? And not impossibly some acquaintance with other women as well? You can't be new to feeling the edge of the most powerful weapon in their armoury. You must have suffered before from the effect of their having noticed . . . that men are different, men quite often wonder whether they're doing the right thing and worry about it, men have been known to blame themselves for behaving badly, men not only feel they've made mistakes but on occasion will actually admit having done so, and say they're sorry, and ask to be forgiven, and promise not to do it again, and mean it. Think of that! Mean it. All beyond female comprehension. Which incidentally is why they're not novelists and must never be priests. Not enough of a motive? They don't have motives as you and I understand them. They have the means and the opportunity, that is enough.<sup>11</sup>

Nash's words escalate in intensity, leaving the reader to wonder whether Kingsley meant for comedy to supplant the seriousness of the subject, or vice versa. Readers familiar with Kingsley's personal life will also question whether Nash is a character or, in this speech at least, an authorial mouthpiece: when he mentions that women must not be novelists, for instance, one wonders whether Kingsley is speaking to the reader or, out of spite, to Elizabeth Jane Howard.<sup>12</sup> In this scene, Stanley remains unswayed by Nash's conclusions, but this conversation prepares him for his next meeting with Cliff Wainwright, which dissolves all doubt about the novel's tonal balance between misanthropy and misogyny.

Meeting Cliff in a pub, Stanley reveals that there may be medical reasons to assume that Susan's injury was self-inflicted and not, as she had asserted, the result of Steve's assault. Even though such actions appear to vindicate the novel's dim view of women, and even though the characters appear to be drunk, Cliff and Stanley's conversation extends beyond all borders of

commonsense or propriety. As a consequence, the book stammers to an abrupt, unsettling halt. As Cliff discusses spousal abuse, one feels as if not only he, but Kingsley as well, has lost control over his words.

According to some bloke on the telly the other night, [Cliff reflects,] twenty-five per cent of violent crime in England and Wales is husbands assaulting wives. Amazing figure that, don't you think? You'd expect it to be more like eighty per cent. Just goes to show what an easy-going lot English husbands are, only one in four of them bashing his wife. No, it doesn't mean that, does it? But it's funny about wife-battering. Nobody ever even asks what the wife had been doing or saying. She's never anything but an ordinary God-fearing woman who happens to have a battering husband. Same as race prejudice. Here are a lot of fellows who belong to a race minding their own business and being as good as gold and not letting butter melt in their mouths, and bugger me if a gang of prejudiced chaps don't rush up and start discriminating against them. Frightfully unfair." (253-54)

One might try to exonerate Cliff, acknowledging his inebriation and excusing his perception as permanently tainted by television, but such readerly maneuvers only confirm the danger of the novel's ideological terrain. Cliff's sexist and racist remarks parallel similar, less noticeable, attitudes expressed earlier in the novel, and there is no mistaking the new absence of authorial mediation or correction. Cliff's words are self-interested and unexamined: they are "mood-clichés" or "inherited propositions," in Martin's lexicon. Significantly, they are also the same faults of mind for which Kingsley satirized the Welches in *Lucky Jim*, confirming just how far from its source Kingsley's satire had traveled. The novel veers from satire and towards propaganda, eroding many of the narrative foundations that supported Kingsley's comic realism in earlier novels. For the first time, Stanley accepts the bareness of his friend's pronouncement

and accedes that the “root of all the trouble is that we want to fuck them, the pretty ones, women I mean.”<sup>13</sup> Finally, he concludes, “In fact women only want one thing, for men to want to fuck them. If they do, it means they can fuck them up. Am I drunk? What I was trying to say, if you want to fuck a woman she can fuck you up. And if you don’t want to she fucks you up anyway for not wanting to. . . . Actually, they used to feel they needed something in the way of provocation . . . but now they seem to feel they can get on with the job of fucking you up any time they feel like it. That’s what Women’s Lib is for” (254).

These discussions attempt to justify the characters’ conclusions in light of the novel’s remarkable actions, especially Susan’s use of self-violence to prompt Stanley’s rejection of his son. Despite such things, however, the novel degenerates into vituperation, abandoning the finely balanced tensions that previously animated it. Even though Kingsley takes steps to emphasize his characters’ inebriated state, perhaps intending to establish some satiric distance, Stanley’s ill-timed conclusions extend well beyond the novel’s internal justifications. Uncomfortably, Kingsley seemed to betray his own attitude towards women and the feminist movement. He revels too joyfully in his characters’ ecstatic exaltations, and in contrast to his earlier novels, *Stanley and the Women* lacks the tonal moderation and redemptive comedy that reverberates throughout his best, and even his darker, work. The ending violates the correspondent relationship between author and reader that Kingsley championed throughout his life, and in the process, it undermined the novel’s intellectual and emotional foundations.

In contrast to the nonsensical charge of philistinism in *Lucky Jim*, in other words, there remained some validity for the socio-literary objections to *Stanley and the Women*. Marilyn Butler’s premise that the novel worked as a vehicle for Kingsley’s own self-examination -- a deconstructive “probe into his own crusty authorial personality” -- ultimately fails to account for

the ending, which betrays Kingsley's soured views of women and marriage and undermines the novel's ironic distance. Disappointingly, Stanley loses the reason, humor, and dimensional flexibility that earlier distinguished his character, and in the final analysis, he becomes little more than a caricature, painfully similar to the novel's other sexist characters. For Martin Amis, the problem was not just artistic but ideological: "*Stanley* is in fact a mean little novel in every sense, sour, spare, and viciously well-organized. But there is an ignobility in the performance. Here the author implements – and literalizes – Jake's poetical promise: i.e., men only. There is certainly no sexual disgust in it (Kingsley was never that kind of woman-hater). The grounds are purely intellectual." Martin's conclusion is even more assertive: "I always thought it was suicide: artistic suicide. He didn't kill the world. He just killed half of it."<sup>14</sup>

Equally controversial, certainly more graphic, and characteristically experimental, Martin's *Money* surpasses *Stanley and the Women* in its narrative balance and structural complexity. Although Martin admitted in 1980 that he was "no real admirer" of his first two novels, regarding them as a "mixture of clumsy apprenticeship and unwarranted showing off,"<sup>15</sup> *Money* is a masterful metafictional epic that shows Martin at the height of his authorial powers, in full control of his explosive themes and over-reaching characters. Though widely divergent in style, *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* present equally disturbing portraits of manhood in the midst of the feminist movement. Whereas Kingsley's novel tries but fails to support its controversial stances, Martin's novel glories in its carnivalesque bacchanalia, simultaneously celebrating and satirizing the frenzy of its egotistical narrator, the appropriately named Everyman, John Self.<sup>16</sup>

Revaluative Feminism?: *Money*, Misogyny, and Doubling

*Money*'s plot is far from simple. An English director of campy television commercials, John Self has been hired by an American producer, Fielding Goodney, to direct a screenplay, alternately titled, *Good Money* and *Bad Money*. The movie is doomed to failure, part of an elaborate scheme to dupe Self out of his money. In the course of the novel, Self vacillates between extremes of self-indulgence and self-improvement. He craves autonomy yet laments his apparent lack of free will; he acknowledges his actions in the role of victimizer but fears, correctly, that he is the victim of some powerful malevolent force; and in the end, despite his numerous attempts at improvement, events collude to thwart him, and the book culminates in a whirlwind of deceit and painful recognition.

Upon its release, reviewers attested to the novel's energy and force. Karl Miller labeled it "an obscene orphan delirium"; Ian Hamilton praised its "urban-apocalyptic high fever"; and David Lodge called it a "skaz narrative in the *Notes from Underground* tradition, a demonic carnival, a suicide note from a character who indulges in every excess of the lower body." Finally, Jonathan Yardley summarized the plot as "one long drinking bout, interrupted only briefly by a period of relative sobriety": "It contains incessant sexual activity, much of it onanistic; it has a generous supply of sordid language . . . and it has an unkind word for just about every race, creed or nationality known to exist." In short, Martin garnered a mountain of praise for his novel's vibrant, complex narration, and little doubt now remained that he had assumed leadership of the Amis literary dynasty, usurping his father's authority. As with previous novels, however, Martin's explicit narration came at a cost. Despite Ian Hamilton's contention that *Money* would be "thought of for years as one of the key books of the decade,"<sup>17</sup>



the novel was shunned by the Booker Prize selection committee, as was Kingsley's *Stanley and the Women*. To many people, these snubbings seemed to derive from similar, extra-literary sources -- the presumed misogyny of the Amises' portraits of women.

As with *Stanley and the Women*, evidence of the book's anti-feminist matrix is easy to locate. Throughout the novel, John Self revels in a maelstrom of money, pornography, sex, and liquor, glorifying the vices of his entropic, devolutionary, and dehumanized environment. "You know where you are," he tells the reader at one point, "with economic necessity."<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, he expresses his desire to be back in London, visiting his lamia, Selina Street. "I only ask one thing," he remarks, "And it isn't much to ask. I want to get back to London, and track her down, and be alone with my Selina -- or not even alone, damn it, merely close to her, close enough to smell her skin, to see the flecked webbing of her lemony eyes, the moulding of her artful lips. Just for a few precious seconds. Just long enough to put in one good, clean punch. That's all I ask" (23). In a later, more comic scene, we get yet another example of Self's tendency to sacrifice higher ideals, including romantic love, at the altar of lust, greed, and power. Maintaining that it is "essential to her dignity and self-respect," Selina asks Self to open a joint bank account. Self, however, tries to disabuse her of the notion, "arguing that her dignity and self-respect can get on perfectly well under the present system, with its merit awards and incentive schemes." After Selina breaks his resolve, dressing so unattractively that she cools even Self's raging blood, Self recounts the changes in their relationship: "The day before last, however, I decided to open a joint bank account. I filled out the forms, coldly supervised by the watchful, sharp-shouldered Selina. That morning she went to bed in black stockings, tasseled garter belt, satin thong, silk bolero, muslin gloves, belly necklace and gold choker. I made a real pig of myself, I have to admit. An hour and a half later she turned to me, with one leg still

hooked over the headboard, and said, ‘Do it, anywhere, anything.’ Things had unquestionably improved, what with all this new dignity and self-respect about the place” (85).

As usual, it is impossible to deny that Martin exceeds his father’s graphic depictions and blunt attitudes. However, unlike in *Stanley and the Women*, these elements of *Money* are not as disturbing as one might expect. Why, then, one must ask, does *Money* succeed where *Stanley and the Women* faltered? Why did Kingsley’s novel suffer at the hands of publishers and critics whereas Martin’s novel was elevated to its status as a crucial *fin-de-millennium* text? To these queries, there seem to be three primary responses, and each illuminates the intertextual resonance of the Amises’ novels, revealing their contrasting narrative methods as well as their literary battles over realism and postmodernism.

The first explanation for why *Money* succeeds where *Stanley and the Women* fails is that Martin provides more than ample justification for his hero’s stereotypical reductions. The film industry where Self works, the people with whom he comes in contact – even Self himself: all are masters of deceit and manipulation. Attesting to the thematic congruence between his and his father’s novel, Martin has argued that every character in *Money* is “a kind of artist -- sack-artists, piss-artists, con-artists, bullshit-artists.”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the characters seem locked in a vortex of corruption, greed, and desire, an interminable black hole of individualism and solipsism. However, the grandeur of Self’s cinematic experiences gains a narrative credibility that Stanley’s excoriation of wives, women, and therapists does not, even though these characters similarly function as emblematic con- and bullshit-artists.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, Martin maintains the aesthetic distance that vanished in Kingsley’s work. *Money*’s inflammatory depictions are less troubling because they are so clearly those of the book’s narrator, John Self. The reader tends to excuse Self’s

incendiary remarks because he is comical, self-mocking, and *always* emotionally unstable. Despite his repulsive nature, he is a remarkably endearing narrator who consistently tempers his caustic opinions, either with humor or by blatantly appealing to the reader. Undeniably one of literature's most self-absorbed, morally bankrupt characters, Self remains acutely aware of the impression he makes on other people. "I want sympathy," he tells us early in the novel, "even though I find it so hard to behave sympathetically" (32). Elsewhere, he apologizes for his continual relapses into pornography, remarking that he "didn't dare tell [us] earlier in case you stopped liking me, in case I lost your sympathy altogether -- and I do need it, your sympathy" (196). Through Self's excessive self-awareness, Martin anticipates and thereby attempts to silence the objections of his readers: he embeds a self-reflexive critique within *Money* that is absent in *Stanley and the Women*, and this second narrative level affords him the artistic freedom to manipulate and coerce. As does Humbert Humbert in Nabokov's *Lolita*, John Self betrays himself directly, reveling in his pornographic dramatic monologue, his elaborate postmodern confession, in ways that Stanley Duke never does in Kingsley's novel. As the furor over *Lolita* demonstrated, however, the public does not always exonerate an author from his fictive transgressions, so to deter readers from this complaint, Martin took an additional step to guarantee he not be affiliated with his charmingly egotistical hero.

In a final maneuver, Martin inscribes himself into the novel, artificially enacting a separation between himself and his narrator, regardless of how one interprets such doubling. Although authors as far back as Chaucer have experimented with narrative involution – one could point to Sterne and Rabelais as influences as well – Martin's fictional *semblable* derives especially from Nabokov's carnivalesque forms of postmodern narration. As do Nabokov's authorial surrogates, Martin's function in a complicated amoral fashion, playfully disrupting the

framework of the novel. Ironically calling attention to the artificiality of his narration, Martin's secret sharers accelerate the thematic tensions between reality and illusion, realism and postmodernism. "I was wondering whether I did put 'me' in the novel because I was so terrified of people thinking I was John Self," Martin explained to John Haffenden; "But actually, I've been hanging around the wings of my novels, so awkwardly sometimes, like a guest at the banquet, that I thought I might jolly well be in there at last." Explaining that the precedent for his interpolation was an abandoned novella he began after completing his third novel, *Success*, Martin reflected that the earlier attempt portrayed him as a heavy-handed moral barometer, a central conscience designed to summon the unrepentant characters from his earlier novels (such as Charles Highway from *The Rachel Papers*, Andy Adorno from *Dead Babies*, and Gregory from *Success*) and "put things right with them." He wondered how something so "self-indulgent could be such murder to write" and soon abandoned the project.<sup>20</sup>

In *Money*, by contrast, Martin's namesake has a much greater range of duties and is far from the moral exemplar his earlier model purported to be. In the same way that Conrad reworked his seafaring experiences through Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim*, Martin invoked his namesake as a parodic exploitation of the social and literary expectations he faced as a celebrity-author. Viewed in the context of his narrative rivalries with his father, Martin can be seen as reworking the tonal imbalances that weakened Kingsley's novel as well as his earlier book, *Jake's Thing*. He swerved to avoid the lack of ironic distance that afflicted Kingsley's use of Stanley Duke, and in doing so, he effectively requited his father's most cherished ideal – the inviolable sacred contract between reader and writer.

Among his many roles in *Money*, the Martin Amis character acts as counselor and advisor to John Self. He enlightens him about the limits of his destructive behavior and creates a

screenplay to mediate the petty rivalries of the actors in his movie, assuaging their inflated egos. In other words, Martin lends a touch of normalcy or mediocrity to a novel otherwise composed of eccentric narcissists, and although he appears initially to be an example of moral restraint and rectitude, opposing Self's alcoholic and pornographic odysseys, he is eventually revealed as yet another con-artist, the most skillful one in the book. "Every character in the novel dupes the narrator," Martin remarked, "and yet I am the one who has actually done it all to him."<sup>21</sup> In many ways, John Self and the Martin Amis character are postmodern secret sharers, partners in a conspiracy of financial dependence and illusion. As with all such symbolic doubles, Self and Martin engage each other in a battle to assert the primacy of their worldviews. Numerous times, Self remarks on Martin's lack of wealth. On one occasion, he even chastises him for not spending enough: "It's immoral. Push out some cash. Buy stuff. Consume, for Christ's sake." Martin responds by saying he prefers not to enter the "whole money conspiracy" (243), and he tries to neutralize Self's arrogance by invoking his lack of education. Throughout the novel, Self is punished for his lack of knowledge, but this becomes especially clear when he comes up against literature, stumbling into discussions, as in those with the Martin Amis character, for which he is ill-prepared and unable to draw the right conclusions. Even in a brothel, for instance – Self's personal *locus amoenus* – literature haunts him, feeding on his lack of culture. Assuming Martin's name on one occasion, Self meets a prostitute who is working towards a degree in English literature. "Call me Moby," she says, before proceeding to ask what Self does for a living. Learning that he is a writer (or at least is pretending to be), she quickly breaks through his weakened façade: asking whether Self writes genre or mainstream fiction, she succeeds in confusing Self, who cannot comprehend her words and hears only the meaningless question, "John roar mainstream?" (97). In brief, the Martin Amis character offers

Self a rival morality based not on consumption or selfishness but on the higher ideals of literature and self-awareness. As we will see, these elements of characterization, theme, and voice also affect the book's feminist entanglements, shedding light on Martin's controversial portraits of ladies and confirming why, even in the light of feminism, Martin's novel, unlike Kingsley's *Jake's Thing* and *Stanley and the Women*, can be considered a classic instead of a misogynist exercise.

Despite the many charges of sexism that attended the book's publication, Martin has always asserted that he does not consider *Money* to be a misogynist or even a sexist text. Speaking with James Naughtie on Radio 4's "Book Club" in 2001, he stated simply: "I was a feminist when I wrote *Money*, which I think is too programmatic a feminist book, although of course it was denounced as sexist at the time." Elsewhere, he has called himself one of the declaratively feminist writers of his generation.<sup>22</sup> If one mistakes the important facets of John Self's character described above, it is easy to overlook the logic of Martin's claims. *Money* is certainly an aggressive text, which readers with tender sensibilities should probably avoid; underneath John Self's sexist veneer, however, the novel's thematic grammar is declaratively feminist ... and overly programmatic, as Martin noted.

Applying the work of Sara Mills on *London Fields*, *Money* might be interpreted as indicative of an avant-garde feminism that embraces the contradictions that lie at the heart of the feminist movement. Citing the work of Shan Wareing, Mills argues that it is possible for a text to present conflicting messages about its female characters, divided between an "older ideology" that portrays women as sexually vulnerable and passive, and a "more modern position" which portrays women as "strong and active in the public sphere." In much the same manner as racist ideologies, she concludes, a reader is confronted with a choice about these "narrative

schemata”: “whether to accept them as part of his/her knowledge and as commonsense or whether to react against them.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Martin embeds such ideological dualism within *Money* by establishing an oppositional tension among its three major characters: John Self, Martina Twain, and Selina Street.

Much as he would later do in *London Fields*, *Money* relies on a parallelism of characters to dramatize its feminist energies.<sup>24</sup> More specifically, Martin polarizes the novel’s two main female characters, the English femme fatale, Selina Street, and the American do-gooder, Martina Twain. As Martina’s name attests, she garners the majority of Martin’s authorial sympathies, being a playful double (Martin A[mis]’s *twain*) as well as an embodiment of his feminized and feminizing viewpoints, complete with a terminal *a* on her name. The polarity between Selina and Martina manifests itself through numerous thematic oppositions, as both women represent contrasting, though equally valid, responses to the grimy urbanity of modern life. As her name conveys, Selina Street epitomizes a downward immersion within such griminess, whereas Martina represents transcendence above it. Street offers Self desire, the pleasures of the body, and baser things, whereas Twain offers him intelligence, the pleasures of the mind, and higher ideals. Martina tries to redeem Self; Selina continues to exhaust him. In other words, Selina is an houri, a lamia, a succubus to Self. By contrast, Martina is an angel, savior, and redeemer. The insoluble problem for John Self, though, is his schism between perception and action: Self can see the light that Martina offers him, but he cannot move into it.<sup>25</sup> Self is hopelessly uni-dimensional, which is one reason he’s so memorable. Selina Street is equally uni-dimensional, however, which is why they are perfectly compatible: they are used to using others (and themselves) up. Self’s choice of Selina over Martina towards the end of the novel represents the melancholy triumph of misogyny, and Self loses everything as a result.

It is patently wrong, however, to label the book misogynist, as Laura Doan has done; nor is it enough to theorize, as does Robert Martinez, that Martin's satires use "women as vessels to articulate a vision of modern sexuality polluted by male misogyny." Although Martinez is right to contend that *Money* "rarely attempts to articulate the consciousness of women," women are certainly not "sexually subjugated"; instead, they are equally as manipulative as Self and, in the case of Martina Twain, more enlightened and hence more powerful.<sup>26</sup> Instead, it is more illuminating to contextualize Martin's embedded use of feminism in ways that Sara Mills and Adam Mars-Jones have done, examining the conflicting messages about women that Martin weaves within his text. These messages emerge when one probes the novel's treatment of metaphysical issues and their corresponding effects upon authenticity.

John Self revels in his pornographic experiences, but they are part of the general exhaustion, iterability, and superficiality that inflict postmodern existence. Jean Baudrillard's famous diagnosis about the "loss of the real" seems especially applicable to *Money*, as Self's reality is both an illusion and an elaborate joke. *Money* further engages Baudrillard by questioning the nature of authenticity in the postmodern world, especially through the characters of Martin Amis and Martina Twain, both of whom attempt to teach Self lessons in authenticity. Martina, for example, gives him a "how-to kit for the twentieth century" (308), composed of books written by or about such figures as Freud, Orwell, Marx, Einstein, and Hitler. Intending to teach Self about higher ideals and the dangers that await those who violate these ideals, she comes to epitomize what James Diedrick and Tamás Bényei define as the moral center of the novel, its crisis-point of value and genuine emotion.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, the Martin Amis character attempts to explain to Self some of the changes that have beset motivation and character in the twentieth century, warning him about breakdowns in logic, meaning, and closure.



These lessons in authenticity assume the status of a stereotypical or programmatic feminist rhetoric in the novel. For Adam Mars-Jones, such maneuvers are indicative of Martin's secreted desire to "align himself with qualities traditionally associated with women, with a certain tender-mindedness." This sub-text, he contends, "bears witness to the tidal pull of feminist thinking, and to a nagging doubt about the authenticity of male experience."<sup>28</sup> In other words, one can recognize in Martin's work a tendency to triangulate when speaking about feminist issues, or to employ feminist rhetoric in a complementary fashion, couching it within the rubric of larger metaphysical threats. In later works such as *Einstein's Monsters* (1987) and *London Fields* (1989), for instance, feminist rhetoric is couched in the language of nuclear war, which threatens to obliterate authentic emotive relationships. In *Money*, however, the threats are capitalistic: money, commodification, desire, pornography.

In terms of representational verisimilitude, Martin has little choice but to portray the interests of his characters as vividly as he does. As its title conveys, *Money* is energized by a thematic attack upon class and upon market capitalism, along many of the same lines that inform Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Much as it does with the characterizations of Martina Twain and Selina Street, *Money* interrogates two polarities of class: one that pulls downward, feeding upon the commodified images that conflict desire, and a contrary impulse to attain higher ideals usually represented by "culture." Regardless of how much money he has, Self is denied the boons of intellect, reason, and logic. In this respect, he suffers from what Martin once labeled the "terror of ignorance." Cultural refinement will forever elude Self because such things come only from understanding the altruistic impulses within society. Self, however, understands only the rhetoric of consumption, and his ignorance of altruism thwarts his numerous attempts at self-improvement, regardless of whether he craves

acceptance by class or by women. Similar to Nicola Six's relationship with Keith Talent in *London Fields*, Selina Street operates as both manipulator and mirror for John Self: she feeds his desires and reflects to him the image of woman he seeks – the image of consumeristic commodification common to pornography.<sup>29</sup>

What seems to bother certain readers of *Money*, at least in relation to feminism, is the novel's unstable morality. Unlike Martin's earlier, aborted novella – in which he attempted to arraign the most immoral characters from his first three novels – *Money* is not an overtly moral or instructional tale. Instead, it is an entropic postmodern allegory that endorses no truth, upholds no transcendent value. In keeping with his postmodern leanings, Martin does not prescribe utopaic formulations of gender, capitalistic, and political relations. Such oversimplification falls outside his literary radar. To Adam Mars-Jones, this produces a “rhetoric deeply suspect and divided” when confronting issues such as gender and nuclear war: “It is actually [Martin's] need for absolution in the modern manner, surfacing most plainly in *Einstein's Monsters*, that most threatens his stature as a writer.”<sup>30</sup> By contrast, however, I contend that it is precisely this interpretive plurality, this divided rhetoric, that makes Martin's work so revolutionary, not simply in a feminist context, but in a much larger and more important generic context as well. In numerous dialogues throughout *Money*, the Martin Amis character lectures John Self about the evolution of literary conventions. Although these discussions seem mostly annoying and irrelevant to Self, they are of great significance to the novel and provide a new intertextual dimension to the relationship between *Money* and *Stanley and the Women*.

Martin's metafictional, self-reflexive dialogues provide the reader with the necessary theoretical framework to conceptualize the novel. Analogous to Pound's “The Jewel Stairs' Grievance,” *Money* provides practical training in the art of reading, teaching the reader how best

to respond to his postmodern maneuvers. More importantly, however, these discussions depict Kingsley and Martin's own feuds over the evolution of literary modes, especially realism and postmodernism. Both literally and symbolically, the conversations between John Self and the Martin Amis character interrogate the bases for the Amises' generational conflict. The Martin Amis character does not simply speak to John Self in these scenes. Instead, he more importantly responds to Kingsley Amis's own critique of postmodernism, as epitomized in *Stanley and the Women* that same year.

### The Amises, Realism, and Postmodernism

Questions of realism and postmodernism lie at the hearts of both *Stanley and the Women* and *Money*, but whereas *Stanley* strives to assert the legitimacy of realistic protocol, *Money* undermines the assumptions that support Kingsley's more traditional brand of moral realism. For the first time in the Amises' family feud, however, such revaluative conflict operated on a mutual level, as both Martin and Kingsley contested the other's narrative foundations and techniques. A novel that intentionally scoffs at fantasy and fabulation, *Stanley and the Women* asserts the primacy of conventional realistic norms. A forum for Martin's postmodern precepts, *Money* directly confronts Kingsley's realistic and paternal critique. Both novels inscribe the Amises' conflicts within their work, revealing the parameters of their unique form of genealogical dissent and clarifying their positions within the twentieth-century's war over mimesis.

Although one would be wrong to position all of Kingsley's fiction within a traditionally realistic framework -- his ghost-novel, *The Green Man*, his James Bond contribution, *Colonel*

*Sun*, and his alternative-world fictions, *Russian Hide and Seek* and *The Alteration*, would reject such a conflation, for instance -- the majority of his work, including *Stanley and the Women*, validates classically realistic protocol. Kingsley appeals to a transcendent reality that can be empirically verified; he depicts individuals indelibly locked in larger, social orders; he provides narrative support for the existence of morality, logic, and reason; he renders characters and their environments in remarkably specific detail; and he proclaims motivation as a valid behavioral gauge. In addition, he strives to maintain the traditional distance between author and text, refusing to undermine the presumed reality of his fictive worlds. A 9 March 1981 letter to Robert Conquest, for instance, foreshadows Kingsley's complaints about fabulism, criticizing his son's more experimental work: "Young Martin's new novel [*Other People*] is out. Tough going I find. You see there's this girl with amnesia shit you know what I mean, so she's forgotten what a lavatory is and thinks the cisterns and pipes are statuary, but then how does she know what statuary is? It's like a novel by Craig Raine, well not quite as fearful as that would be I suppose." Loathe to reject causality and linearity, Kingsley instinctively avoids the confusion that H. G. Wells decried when he spoke of "the splintering frame [that] gets into the picture."<sup>31</sup>

In *Stanley and the Women*, Kingsley interpellates the tension between realism and postmodernism as a thematic opposition between reason and madness, order and chaos. Significantly enough, the two characters who most exemplify this conflict are the father and son tandem of Stanley and Steve Duke.<sup>32</sup> Stanley's quest for logical order conflicts with Steve's schizophrenic fantasies, and their familial tensions mirror the division of realism and fabulation that Robert Scholes famously annotated in *The Nature of Narrative* (with Robert Kellogg, 1966) and *The Fabulators* (1967). According to the paradigm Scholes established, realism "exalts life and diminishes art, exalts things and diminishes words." It enacts a self-conscious rejection of

romance and fabulation, and seeks to hold fantasy at bay, to make chaos conform to pattern. Subordinating imaginative extravagance to empirical reality, it strives to present images of that reality that are accountable to fact, whether actual (as in real historical events) or mimetic (imitative of such occurrences). The foundation of Stanley and Steve's relationship conforms precisely to such generic divisions, and their tense relationship reveals the extent to which Kingsley, through Stanley, continued to taunt his real-life son, Martin. Through episodes of playful literary encoding, Kingsley used *Stanley and the Women* to respond to his son's increasing literary fame and influence. He re-asserted his own literary authority by reiterating his critical rejection of postmodernism, chiding his successful son in the process.

In a minor episode early in the novel, for instance, Stanley asks Steve whether his girlfriend is still reading *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, an allusion to another postmodern novel, like Martin's *Money*, in which the author appears in his work, allowing the "splintering frame" to encroach upon the picture. According to Stanley, the novel is "Quite a read for anybody, of course" (14), echoing sentiments that Kingsley and Elizabeth Jane Howard had both expressed about Martin's early novels. Stanley, like Kingsley, has little regard for experimental fiction. He too dislikes "com[ing] up against any of this modern stuff" (27), whether expressed in literature, psychotherapy, or gender politics. In a passage that can refer to the Amises' generational conflict, Stanley confides to the reader that "Poor old Steve belonged . . . to one of the generations which had never been taught anything about anything" (69). Literature, it seems, is clearly one of the things he had never been taught. When Stanley and his mother-in-law later discuss Steve's attempts at writing, it becomes clear just how unmemorable those efforts are. Responding to an inquiry about "just what it is that [Steve] writes," Stanley reflects upon his son's literary efforts, trying to remember "anything about the few badly typed pages that, in

response to many requests and with a touching mixture of defiance and shyness, Steve had planked down next to me on the couch one Sunday morning the previous winter. But it was the same now as then, really. I had not been able to come up with a single word, not just of appreciation, but even referring to one thing or another about the material. But surely I had managed to tell whether it was in verse or prose? Hopeless” (26-27). Utilizing surprisingly similar syntax, Martin has echoed the cryptographic quality of this passage in interviews, consciously or not. “My father,” he has remarked, “aided by a natural indolence, didn’t really take much notice of my early efforts to write until I plonked the proof of my first novel on his desk.”<sup>33</sup> These are not the only references, however oblique, to Martin’s literary preferences; his mentors, too, enter the novel in gleefully teasing ways.

Inscribing the conflicts the Amises shared over American literature, Kingsley also makes reference to Vladimir Nabokov and Saul Bellow in the novel, chiding his son’s surrogate literary fathers. At one point, Stanley and his wife discuss Steve’s treatment at the hands of his therapist, Trish Collins. Searching for literary analogues that address the chasm between character motivation and action, Susan settles upon Nabokov. “You know, *Lolita*,” she says, “Talks balls by the yard about what he does and yet he’s an absolutely super novelist.” Immediately, Stanley brings her words to a halt, expounding that he is more concerned about the doctor’s “general approach, as opposed to just her style” (113-14), an echo of Kingsley’s earlier critique of the discrepancy in Nabokov’s work between style and substance. Elsewhere in the novel, Kingsley refers to Bellow as well, as when a troubled Steve inexplicably rends the cover from Bellow’s novel, *Herzog*. As in other novels in which a similar event occurs -- Malcolm Bradbury’s *Eating People is Wrong*, for example, or John Wain’s *Strike the Father Dead* -- Steve’s action carries thematic significance. If, as in Bradbury, ripping *Essays in Criticism* signifies the end of the

liberal tradition, and if, as in Wain, destroying a Greek grammar book precludes a fight with one's father, then in *Stanley and the Women*, Steve's desecration should be seen in the light of the similar literary conflict -- that between fabulation and realism. It is entirely appropriate, for example, that Steve should select *Herzog* as his target: besides being a novel that depicts tortuous metaphysical struggles, to which Kingsley was always averse, *Herzog* is a decidedly realistic text, antagonistic to the wild, elaborate fantasies of Steve's creative productions.

After Steve attacks the book, Stanley tries to speak with him, hoping he will communicate his problems. In this and in other conversations between them, one gets the fullest impression of the way Kingsley's novel defends the precepts of realism against the insurrections of Martin's brand of fabulation and postmodernism. "There was so much I wanted to ask him," Stanley remarks,

no deep stuff, no more than what he had actually been doing before he turned up the previous night and what he had in mind to do, but there seemed to be no way to start. . . .

"Do you believe in past lives?" [Steve] asked me, in a rush as before."

"Eh? I'm sorry, son, I just don't understand what you mean."

"You know, people living before and then being born again. Do you believe in it?"

"Oh, reincarnation. No, I don't think so. I haven't really . . . How do you mean, anyway?"

"People that lived a long time ago -- right? -- being born again now, in the twentieth century."

"But they . . . " I stopped short -- there was no sense in starting on what was wrong with that." (40-41)

Steve tries to engage his father in a dialogue about metempsychosis, transmutation of souls, but Stanley refuses to transcend the realm of commonsensical everyday reality, much as Kingsley and other Movement writers rebelled from modernist efforts to diagnose the post-war *Zeitgeist*. The conversation ends, as do most of the dialogues in the novel, on a note of broken communication, of faulty connections. “I must remember to get petrol,” Stanley says, counterbalancing his son’s transcendental leanings, “Would you keep a look out for a place on the way? I had a full tank on Tuesday, you know. It’s all the low-gear work in town” (41).

Towards the end of the novel, a similar conversation takes place, only this time, it leaves Stanley completely dumbfounded, amazed at his son’s ecstatic ramblings and convinced of Trish Collins’s incompetence. Driving with his son, inquiring whether he remembers assaulting his stepmother with a knife, Stanley implores Steve to think back over the previous days’ events. Steve remarks that he remembers something but is afraid of Stanley’s reaction. In return for Steve’s confidence, Stanley promises not to be angry. He then proceeds to reveal Steve’s surprising revelations for the reader:

“Well,” he said, staring straight in front of him, “I remember being born.” I just managed not to drive into the side of a bus. “What?” I said. “I remember being born. Everybody’s done their best to make me forget by telling a different story. Mum says she brought me into the world and you say you’re my father and I don’t really blame either of you -- you probably believe it yourselves by this time. . . . [But] I can remember it, actually being born. Well, I say born, attaining consciousness would be better, more precise. It was like a great light being switched on.

“Yeah, I was put together by these alchemists using the philosopher’s stone. . . . Kept in a vault in Barcelona till needed, then triggered off by radio beam. And here I am,



ready to begin my task.” At that he looked guilty and nervous, as though he felt he had let slip something important. “Er, I want to thank you for all your kindness, Mr Duke. Oh, and I think we should go on calling each other father and son in public. For security reasons. You understand.” (223-24)

Stanley’s response is to pull to the side of the road, “behind a van delivering a lot of eggs.” He contemplates whether Steve’s words derive from current madness or from childhood conflict, “rejecting me or his mother.” Admitting that he would always feel responsible for Steve’s condition, Stanley decides that “Nobody could prove the contrary. Perhaps nobody could prove anything of importance. Having reached this conclusion I drove on, since I was going to have some time” (223-24). Immediately afterwards, Stanley accosts Trish Collins, accusing her of medical malpractice and flawed prognoses.

As during other times when Steve exhibits irrational behavior -- smashing Nowell’s television, spouting racist gibberish, removing himself to the branches of a tree, completing his “Potentium” manifesto -- Stanley operates as an exemplar of classically realistic values in this scene.<sup>34</sup> Throughout the novel, Stanley labors to discern causality and motivation, searching for the logic that underlies behavior. He seeks to uncover the reasons for his son’s irrational actions; he strives to decipher Trish Collins’s self-serving diagnosis; and he forces himself to accept Susan’s jealous self-mutilation. The fictive world that he inhabits closely mirrors a non-fictional external reality, which is presented in an un-romanticized, intentionally anti-sentimental light. A decidedly moral and social figure, despite his unsavory conclusions, Stanley struggles to maintain faith in a causal chain of action, even when this causality is threatened. He appeals to reason and logic in an effort to recover a metaphysical stability, and he opposes Steve’s wild fabrications with his commonsensical, real-world perspective, however limited and mundane it

may appear. The madness of Stanley's son, Steve, therefore functions metonymically, allowing Kingsley to indict the errors of literary fabulation as well as his own son's equally maddening experimentations with the mode.

### Revaluative Realism: *Money* and Meta-mimesis

If *Stanley and the Women* resolved the dialectic between realism and fabulation in realism's favor, *Money* reverses that decision, antagonizing many of realism's classical conventions. Disbanding the classical segregation of author and text, rejecting motivation as an aspect of character, eliminating causality and linearity from the narrative frame, Martin borrows freely from Nabokov and Borges to assert a playful postmodern form, a hybrid of realism and fabulation. As did Kingsley, Martin also encoded the Amis family feud into his narrative, both implicitly – through John Self's relationship with his father Barry – and explicitly, through direct reference. A remarkably self-reflexive text, *Money* satirizes Self's neurotic obsessions as well as Martin's dual struggles as both a developing writer and the son of a famous literary father. Early in the novel, for example, Self informs us that Martin spends a lot of time at a video arcade, or "space-parlour," named appropriately *Family Fun* (71). Soon thereafter, he confesses ignorance of Martin's work, innocently asking the reader, "Do *you* know his stuff at all?" (72). Later, Fielding Goodney, Self's producer, reveals that he has heard of Martin, but only through "some cases of plagiarism, of text-theft, which had filtered down to the newspapers and magazines": "Little Martin got caught with his fingers in the till," Self concludes, "A word criminal. I would bear that in mind" (218).

These allusions all attest to the liberating irony that distinguishes one aspect of Martin's

character in the novel. The reference to the “space-parlour,” *Family Fun*, for instance, suggests both the Amis family nexus as well as Martin’s previous literary offering -- his non-fiction treatment of video-games, *Invasion of the Space Invaders*, published in 1982. The allusion to “text-theft” is similarly autobiographical in origin: though Martin is a self-proclaimed “great lifter of phrases,” the allusion refers instead to a specific incident in 1980, when Martin discovered that Jacob Epstein had plagiarized *The Rachel Papers*, grafting whole sentences unchanged onto the pages of his novel, *Wild Oats* (1979).<sup>35</sup> Even the automobile John Self drives seems to attest to *Money*’s intertextual continuum: as does Stanley Duke’s perfidious Apfelsine, Self’s Fiasco much prefers “hanging out in expensive garages” to driving. “Your car,” the Martin Amis character tells Self on two occasions, “sounds like a bit of a joke to me” (242, 348) – an inside family joke, that is. Such instances of literary doubling multiply when one considers the affinities between the paired relationships of Kingsley and Martin Amis and the characters Barry and John Self. During their initial encounter, for instance, Self embarrasses Martin, accusing him of nepotism. “Your dad, he’s a writer too, isn’t he?” Self remarks, “Bet that made it easier.” Martin responds sardonically, on edge -- “Oh, sure. It’s just like taking over the family pub” (86). Such genealogical ambivalence is mirrored in Barry Self’s profession as well. Barry Self is the proprietor of a pub named after the quintessential literary patriarch -- the “Shakespeare” – and similar to Kingsley’s professional rejection, Barry too withholds paternal support from his son, having on separate occasions invoiced him for the cost of his childhood and taken out a contract on his life. “Why do I bother with my father?” Self contemplates, “Who cares? What is this big deal about dads and sons? I don’t know -- it’s not that he’s my dad. It’s more that I’m his son. I am aswirl with him,” he says significantly, “with his pre-empting, his blackballing genes” (170). Later, Self goes to see his father, hoping to find

some “clues to this whole deal with fathers and sons” (227).

Although the novel is rife with such light-hearted allusions to Martin’s life and work, they do not by any extent summarize the full intertextual resonance of *Stanley and the Women* and *Money*. Though comic in nature, these literary jostlings take on added significance when viewed in the light of the many literary conversations between John Self and the Martin Amis character. Throughout the novel, Martin attempts to teach Self about the modal evolutions of literary realism. However, Self refuses to assimilate Martin’s advice, failing to see its relevance to his life. These dialogues furnish the most complete picture of the way *Money* responds to Kingsley’s text and opinions, simultaneously defining Martin’s technical aesthetic as well as his divergence from Kingsley’s more centrist realistic form.

In both *Stanley and the Women* and *Money*, the opposition between realism and fabulation functions as thematic material as well as the topic of character conversation. Where it is implied in Stanley and Steve’s relationship, however, it is manifest in John Self and Martin’s. The first time that Self and Martin speak, for instance, Self inquires about Martin’s artistic practices, asking whether he invents his fictions or simply reports what happens, recounting his life-experiences. Even when expressed in Self’s broken, inebriated syntax -- “do you sort of make it up, or is it just, you know, like what happens” (86) -- his categories are easily recognizable as Scholes’s between fabulation and classical realism. Significantly, Martin responds “Neither,” prompting Self to suggest a third category, “autobiographical,” that is more relevant to his own narration than to Martin’s other novels.

*Money*, however, eludes categorization in either of these traditional categories. It is autobiographical solely to the extent that the Martin Amis character is a parodic reevaluation of the real Martin Amis. It is realistic to the extent only that it satisfies many of the mode’s primary

characteristics, variously defined as anti-heroism, thwarted ambition and passion, representational acuity and detail, and an attention to social status, manners, and class.<sup>36</sup> However, it also consciously erodes many conventionally realistic foundations, rejecting not only narrative causality but authorial objectivity and character motivation as well. In addition, it repeatedly draws attention to its own artifice, subverting the fictional reality it previously proclaimed. In short, *Money* blends elements from autobiography, realism and fabulation to produce an amorphous, hybrid amalgamation that cannot be easily classified.

As some critics have noted, *Money* cannot simply be labeled an experimental or postmodern text. Catherine Bernard, for instance, follows David Lodge in arguing that *Money* is a form of “crossover fiction” which combines “defamiliarized realism,” metafiction, and fabulation. Drawing from George Levine, Amy J. Elias similarly argues that the novel can be viewed within a long tradition of realist revisionings, consciously blurring the boundaries between realism and metafiction to define a new form of “postmodern Realism” or “meta-mimesis.” Martin himself, however, seems to have given the best advice on how to read and respond to his novel: in a review of Angus Wilson’s *Diversity and Depth in Fiction*, published concurrently with *Money*, Martin argued that previous literary contexts -- the “great forms” of eighteenth and nineteenth century fiction -- had eroded to the point of exhaustion. Echoing similar sentiments by John Barth and Jean-François Lyotard, Martin explained that “Realism and experimentation have come and gone without seeming to point a way ahead. The contemporary writer, therefore, must combine these veins, calling on the strengths of the Victorian novel together with the alienations of post-modernism.”<sup>37</sup>

Martin’s novel is unquestionably more experimental, more meta-fictional, and more postmodernist than a realist work such as Kingsley’s *Stanley and the Women*. However, it is

decidedly more traditional, more realistic, and less experimental than such postmodernist works as Samuel Beckett's *Murphy* or *Watt*, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*, or B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*. In opposition to those writers and texts, which owe a great debt to the nouveau roman, Martin uses *Money* to rework realistic conventions from within the confines of the realistic paradigm, much as he parodically revalued his own persona within the novel itself. *Money* strives to record the meticulous facts of outward appearances, yet it simultaneously asserts the instability and illusion of that reality. It presents the reader with a character who craves sympathy, awareness, and understanding, yet it locates him within a false, unsubstantial environment that lacks motivation, linearity, and logic. In short, Martin performs another critique upon his father's insistent work: only this time, his subject is realism itself, as he consciously revalues realistic protocol from within the mode itself, exhibiting the limitations of the mode as well as those writers who, like Kingsley Amis, failed to embrace postmodern experimentation.

These technical, or aesthetic, issues become the subjects of numerous discussions between John Self and the Martin Amis character. These conversations serve to enlist the readers' assistance in identifying the novel's applicable form, orienting them to the interpretive process, but they also operate as a revaluative response to Kingsley's literary aesthetic. Midway through the novel, for instance, Martin Amis and John Self discuss the "realism problem" which infects Self's screenplay. Self instructs Martin to make the actors in his movie "behave realistically" without conscious awareness, "just so they'll *do* it. Okay?" When Martin objects to the difficulty of this task, Self asks him, sarcastically and ironically, whether he encounters similar difficulties when creating fiction. "Do you have this problem with novels, Martin? . . . I mean, is there a big deal about bad behaviour and everything?" Martin's response is telling:

“No. It’s not a problem. You get complaints, of course, but we’re pretty much agreed that the twentieth century is an ironic age -- downward-looking. Even realism, rockbottom realism, is considered a bit grand for the twentieth century” (230-31).

Speaking with Mira Stout in 1990, Martin admitted that realistic rationales underlie all of his fiction -- that what interests him as a writer is “trying to get more truthful about what it’s like to be alive now.” However, the contemporary scene that he depicts can only be called distinctively postmodernist -- disjointed and fragmentary, dis-unified and mediated, entropic and dynamic. As his fictional namesake makes clear, Martin considers traditional realism to be outworn and outdated, an insufficient mode for capturing modern reality. One year after the novel’s release, Martin elaborated that realism seemed to be a “footling consideration”: “Mere psychological truth,” he said, no longer appeared “that valuable a commodity.”<sup>38</sup>

In *Money*, Martin launches a multi-flanked attack against the realistic protocol that energize his father’s fiction. Seeking to render the contingencies and excesses of postmodern existence in a rival – and inherently more truthful – fashion, he problematizes the whole concept of a luminous reality, eroding faith in character motivation and identity as well as metaphysical truth and causality. Although *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* both depict a similar erosion of transcendent absolutes, Kingsley’s novel relies on the existence of such stabilizing forces for its humor and moral seriousness. Martin’s novel, however, upholds neither logic nor linearity, and it finds only limited stability in the Schopenhauerean imposition of will on the external world. Focused on “the lost subject, . . . waning humanism, disorienting history, unfixed and transient identity,”<sup>39</sup> *Money* portrays the postmodern condition as one in which the individual is especially vulnerable and in which interpretation -- the act of postulating the real, the true -- is dangerously difficult. In a lengthy conversation towards the end of the novel, John Self meets with Martin to

lament the elaborate scheme that liquidated his assets. In his new role as the manipulated manipulator, the trickster tricked, Self is reluctant to challenge Martin's analysis of events, in contrast to earlier instances where his intractability is unbridled. As Martin explains the intricacies of the conspiracy against Self, Self is baffled by the lack of motivation or reason. "Why? Why did he do it?" Self asks Martin, referring to "Fielding, Frank the Phone, the fight at the rear of the porno hall, the dead room in the Carraway":

"Where's the motivation? On the phone he was always saying I'd fucked him up. How could I have? I'd remember. Even with the blackouts and everything, I'd remember."

Martin considered. I felt a squeeze of warmth for the guy as he said, "I think that was all a blind. You never hurt him."

"Really? But then it's senseless."

"Is it? These days? I sometimes think that, as a controlling force in human affairs, motivation is pretty well shagged out by now. It hasn't got what it takes to motivate people any more. Go for a walk in the streets. How much motivation do you see?" (331)

In these comments, there exists no discrepancy between the real and the fictional Martin Amis. In interviews, for instance, Martin is fond of repeating his charge that motivation has become "a depleted, a shagged-out force in modern life," and his fictional namesake echoes the charge later in the novel by stating that motivation is an idea taken from art, not life. It "comes from inside the head, not from outside," the Martin Amis character charges; "It's neurotic, in other words" (341). There also exists no discrepancy between John Self's argument with Martin Amis and Martin's own arguments with Kingsley: "Martin's fallen into bad company," Kingsley



suggested to Charles Michener in 1987, three years after *Money*'s release. "He once remarked to me, 'Motivation in the novel has more or less had its day.' I said, 'Oh, *really?*' It's all those *ideas* about fiction -- they're fatal to the novel."<sup>40</sup> In short, the conversations between John Self and Martin Amis legitimate *Money*'s dissolution of motivation, identity, and fixed meaning, providing a practical lesson in how to read Martin's novel and a necessary forum for responding to his father's realistic objections.

By rejecting motivation as an active ingredient of behavior, Martin dispenses with the foundation of psychological realism. The scheme against John Self originates neither in reason nor warranted grievance. Fittingly, Self's world is one in which reality and truth have been supplanted by fantasy and fabulation, where illusion has replaced fact. His reality is mutable, artificial, and staged; he cannot discern falsity from truth. Martin's remarks also reflect the novel's reluctance to deal with fixed reference or simple interpretation. Although Martin suggests later in the novel that Self's name may hold a key to his victimization, onomasticism itself ultimately eludes totalization. It cancels closure, refusing to be pinned down to any single referent. In true dialogic pattern, Self's patronymic can refer equally to his unbridled narcissism, his lack of identity, or his status as double to the twined pair of Martin Amis and Martina Twain. His patronymic refers to each referent simultaneously, circuitously eroding and reaffirming his nebulous identity as well as his allegorical status.

In contrast to most realistic texts, in which the self remains an ontologically secure construct, in *Money* the self suggests its opposite -- absence, erasure, and lack. An inverted *bildungsroman* in which the self gains no insight through growth or experience, the novel portrays Self in a process of gradual dissolution and exhaustion. Eventually, he finds that his whole world is but a fictional frame. His mental and physical decay, his dying tooth, his

constant headaches, and his recurrent blackouts: all attest to his status as a superannuated allegorical figure. His inanition is not simply parodic, however; instead, it denotes both literary and cultural exhaustion, a breakdown of unifying structure, of transcendent, signifying meaning.

As does identity, meaning too recedes in the face of *Money*'s excessive signification, regardless of whether such excess is financial or hermeneutic. This becomes most apparent in the novel's final chapters, which convey the fullest impression of *Money*'s meta-fictional matrix. True to his intractable nature, Self never relents from trying to transcend his fate, however temporary such release may be. A victim of his creator's narrative predilections, Self must struggle against not only his own limitations but those of his creator's designs. On at least three occasions, for instance, Martin reassures an emotionally beleaguered Self that everything will come out all right in the end (244, 253, 331). However, the penultimate chapter presents every indication that Martin intends to dispense with his "sad, unwitting narrator" (126). Meeting Self for what he presumes to be the last time, Martin suggests that he should leave and let Self "get on with it" (343), presaging a suicide. They two characters then sit down to a Bergman-esque game of chess, which concludes when Self throws a punch at Martin and later attempts suicide. Significantly, he bungles the act.

Were *Money* to end with Self's death, its critique of realism would be less apparent and complete. The novel would conclude with a formal moral reckoning preceded by character enlightenment and repentance. The character of Martin's namesake would have functioned as an ironic and comic double, but it would have served a traditional purpose – an agent of moral awakening, as old as Everyman's visit from Death. Although the novel would be more experimental than many traditionally realistic texts, it would nonetheless satisfy even the most flexible definitions of the mode, especially the assimilative theories of George Levine and A. S.

Byatt.<sup>41</sup> However, in true meta-fictional, postmodern manner, Self fails to carry out his creator's designs, ironically empowering him to transcend his fate as well as his narrative imprisonment within the novel. A self-acknowledged "escape artist" (363), Self ultimately asserts his autonomy from the novel's fictional constructs. He eludes his death as well as his creator's narration, frustrating the novel's attempts at closure, linearity, and meaning.

The last chapter, presented wholly in italics, signifies Self's release from the world of definition and form, from the world of dependency, narration, and plot. Whereas he had earlier described forebodings of illusive reality, or "ulteriority," sensing that his existence was manipulated by external powers, Self notes in the final chapter that his "life" has begun "losing its form," that he can identify only "present . . . continuous present."<sup>42</sup> "Rogue memories" come streaming discontinuously to his mind, filling the gaps previously furnished by his blackouts (355). One of these memories presents a recalcitrant Martin Amis apologizing for subjecting Self to his fictive machinations. Later, Self recounts the final confrontation with his authorial tormentor, who had previously wondered whether there existed a "moral philosophy of fiction."<sup>43</sup> "Mind you, I did see [Martin] once," Self tells the reader, "*Our eyes met as he came through the door: he looked at me in the way he used to before I ever met him -- affrontedly, with a sudden pulse in the neck. . . . 'Hey, what are you doing here?' he asked. 'You're meant to be out of the picture by now.' I just glanced over my shoulder and said -- I don't know why: some deep yob gene must have prompted me -- 'Fuck off out of it.' In the bendy mirror behind the bar I saw him leave, woodenly, stung, scared*" (358-59). The novel's ending therefore suggests an ironic continuation, a circuitous redoubling of narrative. The Martin Amis character cannot understand how Self has eluded his narrative fate, and although Self appears to have excised himself from his earlier indulgences, he confesses that with more money, he will likely return to

his previous behavior, rejecting any hope of enlightenment and closure.

The inverted, negative logic of these events orients the reader to the shifting nature of reality, identity, and meaning in the novel. *Money* struggles against closure and totalization, problematizing narrative fixity as well as extrapolative interpretation. Martin interpellates the historical divisions between mimesis and fabulation, realism and metafiction, in order to dramatize realism's illusory stability. He blends elements from each disparate mode to create a hybrid form of experimental postmodern realism, one that enters into debate with not only literary history and critical theory, but also with his father's correspondent text and deepest literary values. As a revaluative literary figure, John Self represents the enervation of Kingsley's realistic methods, asserting Martin's presumably superior technique. Given the contemporaneous publication dates of the Amises' novels, it is not surprising that Kingsley similarly utilized his main character to criticize Martin's literary strivings, enlisting Stanley Duke to interrogate the fabulism underlying his own son's madness and delusions of grandeur.

When viewed as companion texts, *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* help contextualize the Amises' controversial portraits of women as well as their contrasting perspectives on literary realism and postmodernism. Encoded instances of literary competition and familial chiding, the novels fictionalize the Amises' professional tensions, invoking the Amises' literary conflict as a source for playful yet serious parodic revisioning. Illuminating both authors' technical aesthetics as well as their subversive revaluative critiques, these novels attest to the ways the Amises mutually engaged each other's most cherished literary values. Acutely perceiving the shifting status between Martin and himself, Kingsley used parts of *Stanley and the Women* to contest the foundations of Martin's experimental postmodern form. Perhaps attempting to dethrone his

father's methods once and for all, Martin used parts of *Money* to subvert Kingsley's literary valuation of commonsense, logic, and reason, leveling the foundations of his father's classically realistic form.

Whereas aspects of Martin's earlier novels depicted an artistic struggle against his father's more famous example, *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* depict a significant reversal in that burden of influence. More than a one-sided act of adolescent misprison, both novels in this instance are powerful expressions of confident, independent voices. Fully cognizant of their aesthetic assumptions, the Amises implicitly challenged the foundations that supported each other's fiction, and they did not have to misinterpret each other in order to legitimate their own practices. Rather, their literary quarrels extend beyond the narrowly personal realms of Oedipal or Bloomian conflict, and their two 1984 novels reveal them engaged in a sophisticated literary debate, interrogating the status and future of the realistic novel. In *Stanley and the Women*, Kingsley created a realistic text that rejects and ridicules the exertions of fabulation and metafiction, affirming the vitality of more traditional conventions. In *Money*, Martin created an elaborate metafictional text that scrutinizes realistic conventions from within the parameters of the mode, forsaking causality and meaning as well as character identity and motivation. To Kingsley, Martin's effort was literary blasphemy, unreadable and contemptuous; to Martin, Kingsley's effort represented a form of literary regression, a willful rejection of evolutionary advancement. The results were two novels that separately attempted to presage the future of contemporary fiction, affirming the continued vitality of the Amises' fictional battles, their unique form of intertextual genealogical dissent.

<sup>1</sup> In *Experience: A Memoir* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 99, Martin comments upon Kingsley's paternal glee in this coincidence. Overhearing a comment by Hylan Booker, the godfather of Martin's son, Louis, that he had purchased Martin's novel and his "daddy's book too," Kingsley added, "That sentence will only get said once in the history of the world."

<sup>2</sup> See McDermott, "Kingsley and the Women," *Critical Quarterly* 27.3 (Autumn 1985): 66, as well as *Kingsley Amis: An English Moralizer* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 206-27. Also cf. Walter Allen, *Tradition and Dream: The English and American Novel from the Twenties to Our Time* (New York: Dutton, 1964), 282.

<sup>3</sup> As numerous critics have noted, *Take a Girl Like You* (1960; London: Penguin, 1975) is a modern updating of Richardson's *Clarissa*. As in Richardson, Kingsley's protagonist, Patrick Standish, consummates his relationship with Jenny Bunn, his hounded lover, through rape, while she is intoxicated at a party. In Kingsley's pre-sexual- revolution, pre-politically-correct days, Jenny responds not with litigation or public exposure, but with acceptance and complicity.

<sup>4</sup> *Jake's Thing* (1978; London: Penguin, 1979), 286. See also Elizabeth Jane Howard, interview by Corinna Honan: "At the end of one of his novels, [Kingsley] has a great diatribe about women. A lot of those things he says about women, he lobbed at me from time to time. He lost his libido and he said that I deeply resented that. In a curious way, that wasn't what I minded. I minded not being liked, a feeling of dislike and resentment that was so simmering about the place." In "I didn't know I was going to incur such hatred over the years," *Daily Telegraph*, 16 May 2000. On Kingsley's loss of libido, see Richard Bradford, *Lucky Him: The Life of Kingsley Amis* (Chester Springs, PA: Peter Owen, 2001), 303-16.

<sup>5</sup> For Bradbury, see *No, Not Bloomsbury* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 215. On

Jake as a latter generation Jim Dixon, see Keith Wilson's "Jim, Jake and the Years Between: The Will to Stasis in the Contemporary British Novel," *Ariel* 13.1 (1982): 55-69. Kingsley himself clarified the connection in a 25 April 1985 letter to John McDermott: "One tiny point: 'Jake Richardson' is a deliberate reformulation of 'Jim Dixon.'" In *The Letters of Kingsley Amis*, ed. Zachary Leader (London: HarperCollins, 2000): 997. For Martin, see *Experience*, 29-30: "My objection is simpler than that: I can feel Dad's thumb upon the scales.... He was keeping score with women, and with Jane."

<sup>6</sup> John McDermott reveals that in a radio interview given during the early stages of the novel's composition, Kingsley remarked that his "working title" *Stanley and the Women* "can't really remain" because the book was more about madness. In *An English Moralist*, 219.

<sup>7</sup> For Hennessy, see *A Little Light Fiction* (London: Futura Publications, 1989), 203. For Hitchens, see "American Notes," *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 November 1984, 1310.

<sup>8</sup> For Kingsley, see *Contemporary Authors*, New Revision Series, Vol. 54, s.v. "Kingsley Amis." For Burgess, see the unnamed review in the *Observer*; reprinted, *Homage to Qwert Yuiop* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 514-16. Kingsley's aggressive intentions with the novel shine forth in his 8 February 1984 letter to Larkin: "And by the way it's not another JT [*Jake's Thing*] by any means. None of the sentimental mollicoddling that women get in that. This [*Stanley*] has moments of definite hostility. It's an inexhaustible subject." See also Kingsley's letter to the Editor, *Sunday Telegraph*, 5 August 1984: "I HATE to find fault with such a friendly mention as Sebastian Faulks's last week, but please, my novel, 'Stanley and the Women' does not argue that 'all women are mad.' No, as a leading character puts it, 'they're all too monstrously, sickeningly, terrifyingly sane.' Not that it makes a lot of difference to those at the receiving end, admittedly. Or

to a feminist.” In *Letters*, 969, 981-82.

<sup>9</sup> According to Jacobs and Bradford, Kingsley swore off sexual partners and the prospect of re-marriage after the divorced from Jane, the effects of which can be seen in his poem, “Senex,” which laments the absence of the “lash / At which I used to snort and snivel.” See Jacobs, *Kingsley Amis: A Biography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995), 328ff, and Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 303-16.

<sup>10</sup> For “vehicles for self-criticism,” see “Real and Made-up People,” *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 July 1973; reprinted, *The Amis Collection* (London: Penguin, 1990), 5. In *Experience*, 228-29, Martin comments at length upon his father’s essay, agreeing that “The truth is that you can’t put real people into a novel, because a novel, if it is alive, will inexorably distort them, will tug them all out of shape, to fulfil its own designs.” For the connections between Jane, Nowell, and Susan, see Jacobs, *A Biography*, 317-21, and Bradford, *Lucky Him*, 349-53. For “closing down a whole dimension,” see *Experience*, 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Stanley and the Women* (1984; New York: Summit, 1985), 246-47; subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>12</sup> See Corinna Honan: asked whether Kingsley valued her contributions as a writer, Jane said that Kingsley “was very nice about my writing but if I had put it first as he put his, there would have been trouble. It was an accepted thing that he was a famous writer and I was an also-ran, as it were.” Similar remarks can be found in Jane’s interview with Naim Attallah, “Life with Mr Amis and other tales,” *Observer Magazine*, 31 October 1993, 34-40.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. also Kingsley to Larkin, 3, 5 December 1983: “I also quite seriously fear [the novel] will get me murdered by feminists. ‘The root of all the trouble is we want to fuck them’ &c.” In *Letters*, 964. See also Elizabeth Jane Howard, interview by Corinna Honan: “Kingsley thought



of women as being f—able or decorative and after that, he hadn't much use for them, really.

That made him very difficult to live with, because few of us remain just those two things all our lives.” For “mood-clichés,” see “Don Juan in Hull,” *New Yorker*, 12 July 1993, 79; reprinted, “The Ending: Don Juan in Hull,” *The War Against Cliché*, 153-72.

<sup>14</sup> *Experience*, 310. For Marilyn Butler, see “Women and the Novel,” *London Review of Books*, 7-20 June 1984, 7-8.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Susan Heller Anderson, “New Novelist is Called a Plagiarist,” *New York Times*, 21 October 1980. Also compare “The living V-sign,” in which Martin criticized *Dead Babies*: “It’s a horribly transparent diagram of my earlier influences, shamelessly in the spirit of Burroughs and Ballard, and a ridiculous mixture of Dickens and Nabokov, all completely out of control.” *Daily Telegraph*, 26 January 2001.

<sup>16</sup> In an interview with Jean W. Ross, *Contemporary Authors*, Volume 27, Martin remarked that throughout the first two drafts of the novel, John Self was named John Sleep. Martin then considered the name, John Street, before settling on Self. The analog for Self’s name is most likely Nabokovian, a derivative from John Shade in *Pale Fire*. However, Self’s distinctively charged voice stems from Bellow. As Martin explained shortly after *Money*’s release: “I learned from Bellow’s *Henderson the Rain King* that you can have a great dolt of a character who says completely realistic things like, ‘Thanks, Prince. I wish you all kinds of luck with your rain ceremony, but I think right after lunch my man and I had better blow,’ after a beautifully long, complicated paragraph about all his warring responses and yearnings.” In John Haffenden, *Novelists in Interview* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 8. Similarly, Brian Finney notes that early in *Money*, a producer offers Self a “Rain King cocktail.” See “What’s Amis in Contemporary

British Fiction? Martin Amis's *Money* and *Time's Arrow*," n.d., <<http://www.csulb.edu/~bhfinney/Amis1.html>>.

<sup>17</sup> See Karl Miller, *Doubles: Studies in Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 411; Ian Hamilton, "Martin and Martina," *London Review of Books*, 20 September-3 October 1984, 3; David Lodge, *After Bakhtin: Essays on fiction and criticism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 24; and Jonathan Yardley, "The Comic Madness of Martin Amis," *Washington Post*, 24 March 1985, 3.

<sup>18</sup> *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984; New York: Penguin, 1986), 28; subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically.

<sup>19</sup> Haffenden, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Haffenden, 11-12. In a footnote to *Experience*, 331, Martin remarks that his most direct reference to *Stanley and the Women* occurs in his novel *Success* (1978; New York: Vintage, 1982) with the tributary character Stanley Veale. On narrative doubling, see Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 93-99, and Karl Miller, *Doubles*, 411-14.

<sup>21</sup> Haffenden, 11. The earliest references to the Martin Amis character in *Money* confirm this ironic perversity. Twice, Self mentions that a writer lives near him in London, and that he "gives him the creeps" (42, 71). This writer, he notes, "stops and stares at me. His face is cramped and incredulous -- also knowing, with a smirk of collusion in his bent smile" (71).

<sup>22</sup> See Martin Amis, interview by James Naughtie, Radio 4 "Book Club," 5 August 2001. See also Susan Morrison ("The Wit and Fury of Martin Amis," *Rolling Stone*, 17 May 1990, 101-02), to whom Martin claims his first three novels are "prefeminist" and *Money* is his feminist text.

Similarly, in an interview with Claudia FitzHerbert, Martin says that he and Ian McEwan are two of the most feminist writers of his generation and that he may be an “outright gynocrat.” In “Amis on Amis,” *Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 2001.

<sup>23</sup> See “Working with Sexism: What Can Feminist Text Analysis Do?” in *Twentieth-Century Fiction: From Text to Context*, ed. Peter Verdonk and Jean Jacques Weber (London and New York, 1995), 214-17. The Shan Wareing article Mills draws upon is “Women in Fiction: Stylistic Modes of Reclamation” (*Parlance* 2.2: 72-85), which examines the common tendency for writers to portray women as weak and passive in sexual situations but strong elsewhere.

<sup>24</sup> The relationship between John Self, Martina Twain, and Selina Street arguably paved the way for the triptych of Nicola Six, Keith Talent, and Guy Clinch in *London Fields*. In *Money*, Selina Street attempts to prey upon John Self while Martina Twain attempts to save him. In *London Fields*, however, the pattern is inverted: Keith Talent undervalues and preys upon Nicola, whereas Guy overvalues and wants to save her. *London Fields* is declaratively more feminist than *Money*, however, in that Nicola is strong and in control of all perspectives. Self, by contrast, is weak and rarely in control. Speaking to James Naughtie, Martin praised Nicola Six for satirizing “male illusions – the romantic illusions of Guy and the socio-sexual illusions of Keith, . . . She makes continuous chumps of all the men, including the narrator.”

<sup>25</sup> Susan Morrison, 101.

<sup>26</sup> For Doan, see “‘Sexy Greedy Is the Late Eighties’: Power Systems in Amis’s *Money* and Churchill’s *Serious Money*,” *Minnesota Review* 34-35 (Spring-Fall 1990): 69-80. For Martinez, see “The Satirical Theater of the Female Body: The Role of Women in Martin Amis’s *The Rachel Papers*, *Dead Babies*, and *Money: A Suicide Note*,” available on the Martin Amis Web,

<<http://martinamis.albion.edu/martinez1.htm>>. Similarly, Martin Cropper finds a proclivity in Martin's early novels to portray women as vulnerable, especially to male violence. Speaking about *Money* and *London Fields*, he concludes: "Crucially, Selina Street and Nicola Six are tokenistic, sketchy, upmarket Barbie dolls." In "The Sisyphean treadmill of anguish," *Daily Telegraph*, 31 August 1996.

<sup>27</sup> For Diedrick, see *Understanding Martin Amis*, 83-89, which annotates the extent to which Martina attempts to instruct or humanize Self with intellectual ideals. For Tamás Bényei, see "Allegory and Allegoresis in *Money*," *The Proceedings of the First Conference of the Hungarian Society for the Study of English*, vol. 1 (Debrecen: Institute of English and American Studies, 1995), 182-87. For Baudrillard, see *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (1981; reprint Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). To Baudrillard, the "real" is defined in terms of the media that generates it. Given Self's immersion in the image-based worlds of television and cinema, his reality similarly lacks a third dimension. In *America* (1986), Baudrillard similarly comments upon the disappearance of meaning and the exhaustion of postmodern existence, including the end of history and subjectivity.

<sup>28</sup> *Venus Envy: On the WOMB and the BOMB* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1990), 33.

<sup>29</sup> For "terror of ignorance," see Susan Morrison, 101. For Jameson, see *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) and "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" in Hal Foster, ed. *Postmodern Culture* (London: Pluto, 1985). In *Understanding Martin Amis*, Diedrick draws upon Jameson's work to theorize the "fetishistic rapture" that animates Self's celebratory rhetoric, describing the novel's satire of "commodity fetishism." For mirror effects, see Martinez, "Satirical Theater," which posits Martin's use of female characters

and female bodies as “textual landscapes and symbolic mirrors”: “The absence of consciousness in Amis’s female characters becomes a necessary textual vacancy that his male misogynists inhabit in order to establish his post-lapsarian view of modern sexuality.”

<sup>30</sup> Mars-Jones, 18. For more on the allegorical matrix of *Money*, see Bényei, who argues that Self dramatizes the impossibility of allegory in Amis’s postmodern environment. Noting that Self functions “as a kind of contemporary Everyman, inhabiting the empirical level of the allegory,” Bényei complicates simple formulations by contending that the empirical level is problematic in *Money*: “reality is unreal ... everything (and everybody) becomes a sign, or rather, a palimpsest for changing signs.... Even the body becomes an entity on which the signs of always already present codes are being endlessly inscribed. There is simply no longer any empirical self to be allegorized.”

<sup>31</sup> For Wells, see *Experiment in Autobiography*, vol. II (1934), 495, quoted in Bernard Bergonzi, *Situation of the Novel* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 196. For Kingsley on Craig Raine, see *Letters*, 915-16, as well as Kingsley to Larkin, 3, 5 December 1983, which elaborates, “Yes Craig Raine is a fucking fool. Terrible poet too. All that Martian bullshit.” In *Letters*, 965.

<sup>32</sup> At the heart of both *Stanley and the Women* and *Money* lies a fractured familial relationship. Although both Amises depict familial conflict as a threat to established order, signifying metaphysical isolation, they disagree about its effects. In Kingsley’s novel, such conflict is initially destructive, then finally ameliorative. In Martin’s work, however, the conflict remains wholly destructive, a reminder of past rejections. In the whole of Martin’s oeuvre, one is hard-pressed to identify more than a few supportive parent-child relationships. When parents do appear, they are usually portrayed as imposing and destructive, antagonizing characters either

through direct presence (as in *The Rachel Papers* and *Money*) or through conspicuous absence (as in *Dead Babies*, *Other People*, and *Success*). Often, parents are guilty of crimes against innocence. Only in Martin's later fiction -- *London Fields*, *The Information*, and *Night Train* for example -- does one begin to notice a reverse, protective urge, an attempt to rescue youth from the destructive behavior of older characters, to protect innocence.

<sup>33</sup> *1990 Current Biography Yearbook*, ed. Charles Moritz (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1990), 20, s.v. "Martin Amis." For comments on Martin's early novels, see Claude Rawson, "The Behaviour of Reviewers and their Response to Martin Amis's novel, *Other People*," *London Review of Books*, 7-20 May 1981, 19-22.

<sup>34</sup> Borrowing the phrase from Roland Barthes in *S/Z*, David Lodge remarks that a "classic realist text" exhibits signs of a structure that is coherent and causal and a style that is urbane and "homogenous," freed from binding fates and systems, whether natural or economic. See *After Bakhtin: Essays on fiction and criticism* (London: Routledge, 1990). In *The Realistic Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 14, George Levine argues in favor of realism's social emphasis. Equating the terms *moral realism* and *social realism*, he asserts that realist texts seek to establish steadfast "fictional communities," positing stabilities of language and meaning that contrast the contingency facing individuals in real time.

<sup>35</sup> See Chapter Three, note 26 of the present study for an account of this incident.

<sup>36</sup> These are the primary criteria defined by George Levine in *The Realistic Imagination*. Lodge proposes a related list in *After Bakhtin*, arguing that realism's basic conventions are "coherence and causality of narrative structure, autonomy of self in presentation of character, and a readable homogeneity and urbanity of style" (26).

<sup>37</sup> “Before Taste Was Outlawed,” *Atlantic Monthly*, May 1984, 113-14. In 1979, five years before *Money* and *Stanley and the Women* appeared, Jean-François Lyotard proclaimed that the “postmodern condition” could be described as one in which synthesizing forms and patterns -- his “great” or “meta-narratives” -- had become exhausted, losing their organizing powers. See *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). Similarly, in “The Literature of Exhaustion” (*Atlantic Monthly*, August 1967), John Barth spoke of the desuetude of inclusive formal structures, their degradation and assimilation by postmodern literary maneuvers. For Bernard, see “Dismembering/Remembering Mimesis: Martin Amis, Graham Swift,” in *British Postmodern Fiction*, ed. Theo D’haen and Hans Bertens (Atlanta and Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993), 144. Writing about *Time’s Arrow* (1991), Richard Menke similarly concludes that Martin occupies “an uneasy middle ground between mimesis and diegesis, between representation from within the action and commentary from without.” In “Narrative Reversals and the Thermodynamics of History in Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow*,” *Modern Fiction Studies* 44.4 (1998): 960. For Elias, see “Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism,” in *British Postmodern Fiction*, 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> Haffenden, 8, 16. For Stout, see “Down London’s Mean Streets,” *New York Times Magazine*, 4 February 1990, 35.

<sup>39</sup> In Bradbury, *No, Not Bloomsbury*, 39.

<sup>40</sup> For “shagged-out force,” see Haffenden, 5. For “fatal to the novel,” see Michener, “Britain’s Brat of Letters,” *Esquire*, January 1987, 110. Also cf. Martin’s interview with Claudia FitzHerbert: when asked why Kingsley took a “more human view” of women, Martin

responded, “that’s because we write in different genres. He was much more of a social realist. My world is more cartoonish than his.”

<sup>41</sup> Levine and Byatt argue that parodic revisioning has always been a necessary component of realistic imaginings. To Levine, realism is a literary mode in flux, composed of multiple, competing forms, a pluralism of “realisms.” Byatt argues that novelists have always attempted to reform the novel by questioning conventions from within the novel itself. For Levine, see “Realism Reconsidered,” in *Essentials in the Theory of Fiction*, ed. Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988), 336-49. For Byatt, see “People in Paper Houses: Attitudes to ‘Realism’ and ‘Experiment’ in English Postwar Fiction,” in *The Contemporary English Novel*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), 19-42.

<sup>42</sup> *Money*, 113, 264, 354, 361. Earlier in the novel, he contemplates whether he may be infected by “some new mad cow disease that makes you wonder whether you’re real all the time, that makes your life feel like a trick, an act, a joke” (61). Later, he says he is “tired of being watched and not knowing it . . . tired of all these absences” (129).

<sup>43</sup> Martin’s apology harkens back to an earlier conversation with Self, in which he considered whether there exists a “moral philosophy of fiction,” asking Self, “When I create a character and put him or her through certain ordeals, what am I up to -- morally? Am I accountable” (241). Elsewhere, Martina Twain – whom Martin calls elsewhere the “second joker in the pack” (345) -- comments upon the sympathetic position of Self as the “reluctant narrator -- the sad, unwitting narrator,” who exhibits the “pathos” and “helplessness of being watched, and not knowing” (126).