1989

The narrative persona of Martin Amis: A transitional stylistic bridge between postmodernism and new journalism

Janice Arlene Kollitz

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THE NARRATIVE PERSONA OF MARTIN AMIS: A TRANSITIONAL STYLISTIC BRIDGE BETWEEN POSTMODERNISM AND NEW JOURNALISM

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty of California State University, San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts in English Composition

by Janice Arlene Kollitz
April, 1989
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Date
13 April 1989
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Abstract

Postmodernism is a cultural phenomenon of the late twentieth century characterized by fragmentation, solipsism, decanonization, hybridization, and carnivalization—a new way to view reality. Specifically, the term is used to define these characteristics as expressed in the arts: film, theater, music, dance, fine art, architecture, and literature.

New Journalism, a technique developed by a few innovative American nonfiction writers (Wolfe, Mailer, Capote, Didion) during the postmodern period and designed to break the hundred-year-old British pattern of rigid expository writing, raises journalism from objective reporting to the realm of art by using postmodern fictional devices in nonfictional prose.

Martin Amis, a young British critic and novelist, provides a transitional bridge between postmodernist fiction and New Journalism by demonstrating how the fictional stylistic devices of the novel can be successfully replicated in nonfiction.

This study compares selected stylistic devices used by postmodern novelists and New Journalists to create their art, with particular emphasis placed on the narrative voice Amis creates in both his fictive and nonfictive work.
I. Introduction

Noon, Tuesday. I lay immobile in the bath, like a dirty old alligator—not washing, just steaming and planning.

What clothes would I wear? Blue madras shirt, black boots, and the old black cord suit with those touching leather elbow-patches. What persona would I wear? On the several occasions I had seen her last August I underwent several complete identity-reorganizations. Settling finally somewhere between the pained, laconic, inscrutable type and the knowing, garrulous, cynical, laugh a minute, yet something demonic about him, something nihilistic, muted death wish type. Re-vamp those, or start again? (Rachael Papers 46)

British essayist and novelist Martin Amis creates distinctive narrative personae in both his fictive and nonfictive prose by combining several stylistic techniques conventionally associated with both New Journalists and postmodern novelists. The exploration of Amis' dynamic use of first person narrative voice, through which he creates and reveals the persona dominating a particular text, demonstrates how he uses postmodern novelistic devices to entice his audience into becoming active participants in
creating the narrative. Amis also employs the New Journalistic method of juxtaposing selected stylistic devices traditionally assigned to novels, creating a nonfictional prose style uniquely his own. Tom Wolfe's comparisons between what he sees as fictional devices used by New Journalists and traditional patterns of expository prose establish a base to begin analysis of Amis' writing techniques. His nonfiction suggests a potential reconciliation between the seeming oppositions of the goals and techniques of New Journalism and postmodern fiction.

Amis' nonfiction creates a significant and useful link between current generic distinctions. Because his first person narrative is the major factor affecting the audience, distinctive manipulation of point-of-view, scene-by-scene construction, status details, and metaphor become important devices that Amis borrows from both New Journalists and postmodern novelists. Status details and scene-by-scene construction are terms used by Wolfe to define how New Journalists develop their narratives. Wolfe defines status details as:

- a recording of everyday gestures, habits, manners, customs, and styles of furniture, clothing, decoration, styles of traveling, eating, keeping house, modes of behaving toward children, servants superiors, inferiors, peers, plus the various looks, glances, poses, styles of walking and other
symbolic details that might exist within a scene.
(Wolfe 32)

Wolfe describes scene-by-scene construction as: "telling the story by moving from scene to scene and resorting as little as possible to sheer historical narrative" (31). 

A pattern develops that creates a transitional bridge between contemporary fiction and nonfiction when one compares Amis' writing with such New Journalists as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, Truman Capote, and Joan Didion, and with such postmodern novelists as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, and Kurt Vonnegut.

Michael Johnson states that New Journalism is identified by the professional "writer's attempt to be personalistic, involved, and creative" when writing contemporary nonfiction (46). The writing is generally non-objective and adheres to the writer's own sense of morality and radical reactions to late twentieth-century lifestyles and events. New Journalists frequently use "muckraking" and contemporary language patterns (46). In addition, New Journalists use traditional fictional devices--dialogue, first person narrative (including definitive personae and narratees), and second person direct address into the text--something traditional, prescriptive rhetoricians and/or writing teachers have discouraged for years.

Postmodern fiction began to emerge and be recognized after World War II and is characterized by providing
commentary about the confusion, duality, and hypocrisy evident in late twentieth-century society. Postmodern fiction focuses on the ambiguities, fragmentation, disconnection, performance, decanonization, preoccupation with self, and irony permeating every level of twentieth-century life (Hassan 503-20). Like New Journalism, postmodern fiction is frequently written in the first person narrative mode (with distinct personae and narratees) and dips into the second person for direct conversations with the reader.

An understanding of the potential rhetorical effects of the nonfictional narrative persona emerges by examining the stylistic innovations Amis uses to develop his personae and, thereby, provides fresh perspectives for both theoretical and pedagogical approaches to narrative style. W. Wolfgang Holdheim asserts that "works in the essay genre (rather than presenting knowledge as a closed and often deceptively finished system) enact cognition in progress" (11). Holdheim's statement describes Amis' nonfictional writing; throughout Amis' work, the reader is constantly bombarded with either the persona's "aha" or the narratee's "aha." Reactions from the persona and narratee cause readers to also react to the text with an "aha" of their own. Amis evokes these "ahas" by relying heavily on the development of his narratees as foils for his personae.

Kurt Vonnegut defines the difference between
traditional newspaper reporters and those writers who have their own voice:

Newspaper reporters and technical writers are trained to reveal almost nothing about themselves in their writings. This makes them freaks in the world of writers, since almost all of the other ink-stained wretches in that world reveal a lot about themselves to readers. We call these revelations, accidental and intentional, elements of style.

These revelations tell us as readers what sort of person it is with whom we are spending time.

(How to Write with Style 438)

Like Charles Highway (persona in The Rachael Papers), Amis decides what persona he will wear and then creates a specific narratee to further influence the reader. By first looking at the process Amis uses to develop the narratee, a clear understanding of how the persona manipulates the reader is established. Because of the persona/narratee relationship, readers are lured into re-examining their own way of looking at reality.
II. Amis' Use of the Narratee

Then again, there are often numerous passages in a narrative that, although they contain apparently no reference—even an ambiguous one—to a narratee, describe him in greater or lesser detail. Accordingly, certain parts of a narrative may be presented in the form of questions or pseudo-questions. Sometimes these questions originate neither with a character nor with the narrator who merely repeats them. These questions must then be attributed to the narratee and we should note what excites his curiosity, the kinds problems he would like to resolve. (Prince 13-14)

Any comprehensive study of the persona in a given work should include commentary about the persona's complementary position: the narratee. Without such consideration, an entire element of analysis is missing. According to Gerald Prince, the narratee is a fictional entity (to whom the narrator—persona—speaks directly in the work). By using Prince's "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee" to define narratee characteristics, a rhetorical and stylistic analyst can see how Amis uses the narratee as a device to develop personae in both his fictive and his non-fictive prose.

The narratee is not the listener or reader. Instead,
the narratee is a separate entity created by the author as a foil for the work. The narratee should not be confused with the "virtual, ideal, or real reader" of the narrative. Prince defines the "virtual Reader" as one who is given certain qualities by the persona (depending on the particular viewpoint the author holds about society—either in general or specifically), the "real reader" as the public the "writer does not deserve", and the "ideal reader" as one who "understands perfectly and agrees with the persona in every respect" (9).

Prince first establishes the narratee's identity by defining the qualities of the "zero-degree" narratee, who knows the language of the persona, knows denotations (but not connotations), knows perfect grammar, can detect semantic and "syntactic ambiguities," can grasp "presuppositions and consequences" (as used in modern logic), has "sure-memory" about which he has been informed and the consequences that can be drawn from them, can "only follow a narrative in a well defined and concrete way," is "without personality or social characteristics" (not good or bad, has no opinion, is neutral), knows only those facts about the characters and events in the narration as stated by the persona, and is not familiar with other texts and allusions (9-11). Because the zero-degree narratee has no original ideas, the writer is able to establish a tone for the narrative by creating a specific narratee that will
react in a predictable manner.

Once the zero-degree narratee is established, the writer can begin to add other qualities that change the zero-degree narratee into a specific narratee. A classic example of this technique is found in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*—providing a visible narratee in the opening paragraphs of the narrative as the persona, Marlow, introduces his companions on the "Nellie, a cruising yawl" (7). The companions become the narratee to whom Marlow relates his tale about the "darkness" of Africa; they all share a common sociological experience by which they may decipher the narrative, since they are all part of Victorian English culture. Therefore, Marlow, the persona, establishes a specific narratee: his companions on the yawl. Although Marlow's companions find his tale disturbing, they understand colonialism and European elitism. Therefore, obvious sociological facets need not be mentioned to be understood.

Specific narratees have the same basic qualities as the zero-degree narratees but with some obvious distinctions: specific narratees develop deviations because the narratee is being manipulated by the persona. Prince states:

> it should be possible to describe each one of them as a function of the same categories and according to the same models. It is necessary to identify at least some of these characteristics as
well as some of the ways in which they vary and combine with each other. (10)

However, readers sometimes find difficulty in trying to establish categories. Less confusion exists if the reader adopts the deconstructionist idea that only four "discrete entities" (reader, method, text, interpretation) need be considered and then combined into one single interpretation because reading is a "process of application":

Now, the significance of the post-structuralist model is that it collapses all four of these entities into a simultaneity, into a single, continuous act of interpretation so that, instead of four discrete items in a row—subject [reader], method, object [text], interpretation—all are a part of a single evolving field of discourse.

(Tompkins 733)

Therefore, the "real reader" is able to synthesize the information into a personal and individual interpretation of information presented by the persona and a clear understanding of the relationship between the persona and the narratee emerges.

"Philip Roth: No Satisfaction" is a sarcastic critique of Roth's writing and the "Jewishness" that is evident in his novels. The writing style Amis uses in this essay is a clear example of New Journalism. His first person non-objective narrator speaks directly to the specific narratee:
Roth's women. There are three kinds of them, too, and each novel in the trilogy gives emphasis to a different type (I think we had better call it the "My Life" trilogy. But stay, gentile reader: mere Jewishness is seen as ever less central to the Roth predicament, and is given only incidental treatment here). (Moronic Inferno 42)

Obvious clues a writer uses to define the narratee are asides. In this passage, Amis is identifying the narratee as non-Jewish. He is clearly showing that the narratee should not worry about "Jewishness" but should pay attention to the genuine problems that need resolving. Amis is also telling the narratee to be aware that Roth stereotypes women into three categories (and those categories are created by Roth's own experiences).

Prince defines the signals a writer uses to distinguish the narratee as "statements in which the narrator designates the narratee by such words as 'reader' or 'listener' and by such expressions as 'my dear' or 'my friend'" (13). Often, New Journalists write in the second person to grab the reader's attention (virtual, ideal, or real). However, many times the writer also uses the second person to identify the narratee. And the narratee can even be referred to as an indefinite second person:

Now what? Will the vision re-expand, as it seems to yearn to do, or will it squirm deeper into the
tunnel of the self? Is Roth's subject the situation of the American writer (something that could do with a little analysis)? Or is Roth's subject identical to--entirely contiguous with--his life as a man?

* * *

(Moronic Inferno 45)

Is Amis talking to the reader, or is he talking to the narratee? I submit that Amis is addressing a specific narratee while he further defines Roth's writing. In the foregoing passage, Amis is speaking to an indefinite second person (the former zero degree narratee, who is developing into a specific narratee).

Amis prejudices the narratee further; the narratee is told that either Roth is too involved with himself (this is possibly an inherent condition of American writers--and that this preoccupation with self is solipsistic, narcissistic, neurotic, and culturally inferior), or that Roth is simply writing about his own life experience (implying that American lifestyles are bizarre if this is the case and demonstrating to the specific narratee that American writers may all be like Roth.

Now that Amis has prejudiced the zero-degree narratee and created a specific narratee in this short essay, he puts the narratee to work by using another ploy--a hiatus. This punctuation device serves to indicate the
place where Amis has finished creating his specific narratee and the place where the "true" information will begin (45-46).

Tom Wolfe writes about the device of making typography "look different" when trying to grab the reader's attention:

I figured it was time someone violated what Orwell called "the Geneva conventions of the mind" . . . a protocol that had kept journalism and non-fiction generally (and novels) in such a tedious bind for so long. (21)

Amis' use of the hiatus and asterick line is an example of the New Journalistic technique of making the printed page look different. In the case of the Roth narrative, the device works to identify the narratee.

Money: A Suicide Note is another sarcastic critique of American life, but this time the work is postmodernist fiction. Amis creates preconceived ideas about his characters with his choice of names. The main character in Money is named John Self. By introducing Self, Amis has already started influencing the zero-degree narratee:

As I bathed my boil (whew--my ass was never one of the world's great sights but it's a real clock-stopper now) I couldn't help thinking of the Happy Isles: She--She--she did it. I have a confession to make. I might as well come clean.

12
I can't fool you. The truth is I haven't been behaving as well as I've led you to believe. No doubt you suspected that it was all too good to be true. (196)

Amis' persona wants the narratee to believe that the persona is weak and lying when he says: "I've led you to believe." The persona also indicates that the narratee actually does believe these facts when he says: "No doubt you suspected that it was all too good to be true."

The real reader understands that Elysium, Eden, and Arcadia are referring to a heavenly place—something ideal and free of debauchery. However, the zero-degree narratee doesn't understand allusions; therefore, references to Elysium, Eden, and Arcadia are understood by the narratee to be nothing more than the sex-palaces Self frequents:

I've gone back to Third Avenue, not to the Happy Isles but to places like it, to Elysium, to Eden, to Arcadia—no more than once a day, I swear to God, and only for handjobs (and on the days when I'm ill or unusually hungover I don't go there at all). I go to adult movies on Forty-Second Street instead. (196)

Notice how Amis switches to the second person when he asks for continuing patience and support from the narratee:

Ah, I'm, sorry. I didn't dare tell you earlier in case you stopped liking me, in case I lost your
sympathy altogether—and I do need it, your sympathy. I can't afford to lose that too. (196)

The persona wants the narratee as an ally, even if the narratee has a different perception of morality. And Amis' choice of words indicates that the narratee doesn't share the persona's life of debauchery. Now the zero-degree narratee is shown to be morally complacent. The real reader begins to question his/her own personal viewpoint about morality.

If the virtual reader is "bestow[ed] with certain qualities, faculties, and inclinations according to" the author's "opinion of men in general (or in particular) and according to the obligation" the author "feels should be respected," then an examination of Amis' texts can demonstrate how Amis' opinions create the virtual reader (Prince 9). In Money, the virtual reader is influenced by the persona and the narratee in the following ways: the persona makes non-objective statements about twentieth-century life, while the narratee provides an alternate objective position. The persona in "Philip Roth: No Satisfaction" is also critical of twentieth-century American lifestyles and attitudes, and is particularly critical of Roth's stereotyping of women and of his Jewishness; therefore, the virtual reader also shares the persona's viewpoint. By accepting what the persona says as the absolute truth (because the narratee only knows what the
persona divulges), the narratee agrees with the persona—thereby intensifying the opinions expressed by the persona about Roth.

If the real reader is a "public" Amis "doesn't deserve," then the real reader is that reader who, for some reason or another, physically picks up the work and reads—gleaning from the text an interpretation founded on personal experiences that are probably different than those of the author (Prince 9). The real reader will be influenced by the persona and narratee: the real reader may find Amis' persona either morally reprehensible, or simply ironic and a Devil's advocate commenting about the failures of twentieth-century Anglo-American society; the real reader may find Amis' narratee either a person to whom the persona is confiding his innermost feelings, or the real reader may identify himself or herself with the narratee.

If the ideal reader is that person who "would understand perfectly and would approve entirely the least of his words, the most subtle of his intentions," the ideal reader is able—by considering the language and allusions used by Amis—to synthesize a new perspective about the text (Prince 9). Amis' ideal reader is well educated—classical allusions, references to current events and current people, contemporary British and American colloquialisms abound—and is influenced by the persona and narratee. The ideal reader makes value decisions concerning Amis' views about society—
by evaluating these views within the framework of the text—understanding why Amis writes caustically about contemporary society and completely agreeing with both the view of the persona and the narratee. According to Prince, the ideal reader is too inept to decipher "texts within the text" and needs the persona and narratee to explain their views (9).

Wolfe, writing about the genre of New Journalism, points out that,

The voice of the narrator was one of the great problems in non-fiction writing. Most non-fiction writers, without knowing it, wrote in a century-old British tradition in which it was understood that the narrator shall assume a calm, cultivated and, in fact, genteel voice. . . . Readers were bored to tears without understanding why.

(Wolfe 17)

To identify the New Journalistic technique of bringing the reader into the text of non-fictive writing, Wolfe coins the phrase "Hectoring Narrator." The non-fictive hectoring narrator is not subtle like the standard (often dull and impersonal) narrator. The hectoring narrator makes bizarre observations that grab the reader's attention—often stating these observations in obscene terms—and often uses the second person to involve the reader personally (16-17). Amis' non-fictive prose demonstrates how he is indeed creating New Journalism style personae who make bizarre
observations—mostly in obscene terms—and Amis regularly creates specific narratees (allowing his personae to involve the reader personally by identifying with the narratees).

Philip Stevick discusses postmodern fiction in his essay "Literature":

No one really doubts the continuing capacity of prose fiction to project human images of substance, with a full complement of wishes and fears, impulses and constraints, living in a world not very different from what we take to be our own, intended to be emblematic of the human condition at the present time. The theory of postmodernism is full of hyperbolic dismissals of possibilities of "character." . . . Yet it would be a strange reader who was not, sooner or later, moved and persuaded by one of the human images in the decidedly postmodernist fiction. . . .

(Stevick 140)

Although Stevick is not directly speaking about persona or narratee, a parallel can be made between his observations about postmodernism in general and the persona/narratee relationships Amis develops to actively involve the reader.

In both his fictive and non-fictive writing, Amis creates personae and narratees who argue with modern society's failure to correct the general state of chaos in
the world. Amis' personae, in his fictive writing, talk to the narratee in a very personal fashion—just as the personae in his non-fictive writing direct ideas to, and identify personally with, the narratee.

Amis uses exactly the same writing technique in creating distinctly sarcastic personae and distinctly sympathetic narratees in both his fictive and non-fictive narratives. Amis's personae are ironic, foul-mouthed, and aware of societal flaws; his narratees are compassionate towards the personae, members of the status-quo, and also—because of the personae—aware of societal flaws.
III. Postmodernism

At worst, postmodernism appears to be a mysterious, if ubiquitous, ingredient--like raspberry vinegar, which instantly turns any recipe into nouvelle cuisine. (Hassan 508)

Interviewed by Publisher's Weekly reporter Amanda Smith, Amis discusses his ideas about narrative personae; Smith asks why he included a character named Martin Amis in his novel *Money*, and Amis replies:

I think people might say that I put myself in that book so that no one would confuse me with the narrator, but that's not really why. I suppose its official label is post-modernism, but I hope that this makes it clear that actually this is an artifice and not a chunk of real life. It's also that, in *Money*, the narrator is being buked by everyone, and he doesn't know it because he has no sort of cultural references. He's in free fall. And of course the person who's duping and buggering him about the most is the author. (79)

This statement suggests that Amis is creating a persona as narrator who is not Amis himself. Every persona Amis creates is a unique personality; Amis' work is witty, vibrant, and succinct. His concern for the ambiguities prevalent in contemporary society screams for the reader
to take notice. One significant device by which Amis manipulates his narrative personae to express his own social commentary, in a manner that demands response from the audience, is manipulating the narrative's point of view. He changes from first-person to second-person to third-person points of view on an irregular basis—which keeps the reader alert. Amis uses all of the standard themes commonly found in postmodern fiction as outlined by Ihab Hassan: indeterminancy, fragmentation, decanonization, selflessness, depthlessness, the unrepresentable, the unrepresentable, irony, hybridization, carnivalization, performance, participation, and immanence (504-08). Amis also plays with duality and time lapses to enhance his fictive work. The easiest way to understand how Amis develops his narrative personae is to examine his use of postmodern fictive elements individually.

Indeterminancies are those "ambiguities, ruptures, and displacements affecting knowledge and society" (504) that include Amis' constant use of duality and time lapses. Miller discusses postmodernist emphasis on duality (in general) and Amis' use of the device (in particular) in his book *Doubles: Studies in Literary History*, where he comments that "allusion and parody ... compounded by affinity" are a dimension of the duality Amis creates in his writing:

Like Bellow, Amis likes to write about change, metamorphosis, what he calls "turnaround". The
problems raised by his novel [Money] are problems familiar to the reader of the literature of its affinities, which has witnessed a turnaround from the condition of the novel to the condition of the poem, and a new kind of subordination to the author of the other people he creates. (414-15)

In his preoccupation with multiplicity, Amis manages to create many ways to demonstrate how its principles work in real life. In Money, John Self is attracted to two women who are opposites: Martina Twain (Martin Amis' twin?) encourages Self to improve himself, while Selena is the siren he sleeps with and dreams "nasty dreams" about. In Success, Terry and Gregory share dual roles—crossing back and forth between protagonist and antagonist. This passage demonstrates the indeterminancies Amis addresses in his fictive writing by describing the multiplicity of late twentieth-century life. In Money, John Self (persona) speaks to the narratee:

You can doublepark on people: people can doublepark on you. Cars are doubling while houses are halving. Houses divide, into two, into four, into sixteen. If a landlord or developer comes across a decent-sized room he turns it into a labyrinth, a Chinese puzzle. The bell-button grills in the flakey porches look like the dashboards of ancient spaceships. Rooms divide,
rooms multiply. Houses split--houses are tripleparked. People are doubling also, dividing, splitting. In double trouble we split our losses. No wonder we're bouncing off the walls. (64)

Irony used in postmodernism is a play or interplay with words in the manner of the deconstructionists, with an emphasis on a "radical vision of multiplicity, randomness, contingency, and even absurdity" (Hassan 506). The foregoing passage from Money illustrates exactly the postmodernist passion for playing with words. Amis indeed creates a "radical vision" succinctly with excessive use of words such as: double, doublepark, doubling, halving, divide, multiply, split, splitting, and tripleparked. That excessive wordiness becomes succinct provides an excellent example of postmodernist irony.

Hassan asserts that the postmodernist only seems to trust fragments. Therefore, in postmodern writing the author prefers "montage, collage, the found or cut-up literary object" and prefers "metonym over metaphor, schizophrenia over paranoia." Amis' writing is full of many stylistic devices mentioned by Hassan as essential tools of the postmodernist: paradox, paracriticism, false reasoning, and "the openness of brokenness" (505).

An example of postmodernist paradox is found in Kurt Vonnegut's Breakfast of Champions, where, after his narrator Philboyd Studge informs the character Kilgore Trout that
he is only a fictional creation, Studge gives Trout his freedom: "I am going to set at liberty all the literary characters who have served me so loyally during my writing career. . . Arise, Mr. Trout, you are free you are free" (301). Vonnegut the writer has created a story with a writer who is the narrator (persona) who is writing about a writer. "The paradox, of course, is that by setting him free, Vonnegut reveals his unfreedom" (McHale 214).

Amis has a very similar situation in his work Money; John Self complains to character Martin Amis about his miserable existence and Amis answers: "Easy. . . . Dry your eyes old son. Treats are in store. You'll see. It'll all turn out right in the end" (253). Self has no freedom at all because he is being manipulated by the author.

Decanonization is summarized by Hassan as applying to "all canons and all conventions of authority" (505). Amis' writing is full of decanonization. Probably the best example is found in Success, where he blasphemes every convention, person, thing, or thought with the word "fuck"--which he manages to use fifty times in eighteen lines as a verb--and then ends his paragraph with the statement: "I want to scream, much of the time, or quiver like a damaged animal. I sit about the place here fizzing with rabies" (52). Amis' hero (persona), Terry Service, in Success is constantly ground up by the system and he is tired of working within society's rules because he concludes that all
rules are hypocritical and aren't effective. The reader is very sympathetic to the persona because this particular passage is emphasized by a hiatus prior to the passage and another hiatus immediately following. In addition, the passage begins by directly addressing the narratee: "You'll have to excuse me for a moment" (52). Since the specific narratee understands only those issues and opinions the persona presents directly to the narratee, the narratee believes that decanonization is appropriate. The real reader (who is a third party to the narrative) tends to develop a heightened sense of the persona's frustration with society and begins to re-examine his or her own conception of canon.

Self-less-ness and depth-less-ness are defined by Hassan when he states, "Postmodernism vacates the traditional self, simulating self-effacement—a fake flatness, without inside/outside—or its opposite, self-multiplication, self-reflection" (505).

Amis considers Bellow the king of American self-reflection and emulates many of his stylistics. In The Moronic Inferno, Amis says:

The present phase of Western literature is inescapably one of "higher autobiography," intensely self-inspecting. The phase began with the spittle of Confessionalism but has steadied and persisted. . . . With all sorts of
awkwardnesses and rough edges and extraordinary expansions, supremely well-equipped, erudite and humorous, Bellow has made his own experience resonate more memorably than any living writer. (200)

Bellow shows this intense self-inspection in his novel The Adventures of Augie March. The narrator speaks about his life growing up in a Jewish ghetto in Ohio by creating memorable images. Amis uses memorable images in all of his work. Amis' writing is full of fresh language when expressing the innermost thoughts of his personae.

The unpresentable and the unrepresentable are flaunted widely by Amis. Money's narrator John Self is a totally unpresentable and unrepresentable character. Traveling back and forth across the Atlantic in search of money, Self becomes involved in every smutty game he can find to sate his desire for instant gratification. Self describes his lifestyle:

I doubledbacked through the faggot district, Christopher Street. I skirted the dike district too—or at any rate two big chicks denied me entry to their purple sanctum. Then I found a place headlined as a singles' bar, and no one tried to keep me out...Now I'd read about these VD workshops in Scum...the joints were popping with air-hostesses, models and career women: five
minutes, a couple of lite beers, and you'd be in a hotel room or service flat with some little darling doing the splits on your face. (114)

In this partial paragraph, Amis has managed to come up with more taboo subjects than other writers introduce in an entire book. The reader becomes numb to the lechery, violence, and overall decadence, thereby proving Amis' point that life in the late Twentieth Century is based upon greed and lust and porn--gone is the pastoral beauty of life.

Carnivalization is a term borrowed from Bakhtin that, at one time, combines the elements of all postmodern thinking (Hassan 507). Amis says the following about his writing and the creation of the persona for his narrator John Self:

The writer's job is to make sense of the new deformities in life--like television, like money, [Saul] Bellow has said that there are various human evils. I think the examples he gave are war and money; they survive identification as evils and just go on happily thriving. Someone said that my new book [Money] is a very dirty book, and my reply is that money is a very dirty subject. It's interesting, you know, the way money is always connected with excrement in myth, like the jewel found in the compost heap.

Without culture, money looms large because it
is the only substance. My poor narrator lives in a money world: the world of culture is there as a sort of taunting presence in his life, and he wants it but he doesn't know how to get it, and all his responses are being blunted by living in the money world. (Smith 79)

Hassan contends that because postmodernism is full of holes and ambiguities, participation is required by the reader to sort out and make sense of reality. Since reality isn't words—words can only explain reality without touching it—Hassan suggests that performance and participation are those acts that actually define reality. He also indicates that postmodernism "may also veer toward solipsism" or "lapse into narcissism" (507).

Amis' book *The Rachael Papers* contains many examples of both solipsism and narcissism. Charles Highway (persona) has a difficult time making the transition from being a teenager to becoming an adult:

> I wonder. Transferred disgust of my own body? No; too boring. Dislike of women? Hardly, because I think male oldsters look just as dreadful, if less divertingly so. Sound distrust of personal vanity plus literary relish of physical grotesqueries. Could be ... Sheer rhetoric? Yes. (91)

Immanence in postmodernism refers "without religious
echo, to the growing capacity of the mind to generalize itself through symbols" and suggests that language can reconstitute the universe (Hassan 508). Amis realizes that reality is what is important and that words are not reality, but only a way to describe it. Therefore, like other postmodern fiction writers, Amis plays with language to make his points. His fictive writing is "high style."

Hybridization, as defined by Hassan, is the "mutant replication of genres" that is the vehicle for development of a cross-breeding between postmodernism and New Journalism, the non-fiction novel, and a "promiscuous category of paraliterature or threshold literature." Hassan further states that,

This makes for a different concept of tradition, one in which continuity, discontinuity, high and low culture, mingle not to imitate but to expand the past in the present . . . a dialectic of equitemporality, a new relation between historical elements, without any suppression of the past in favor of the present. (506-07)

Specifically, postmodernism is the twentieth-century writer's vehicle for expressing disdain about the breakdown of society: selfishness, excessive greed, personal and corporate and governmental hypocrisy, lack of compassion, addiction to booze and drugs and pornography, and obsession with war machinery capable of ending life on planet Earth.
Amis manages to discuss most, if not all, of these themes in each of his fictional works. Amis' masterful use of the persona and narratee make the reader a third party participant in the stories. And he develops a rapport with his readers, gaining their agreement with his point of view by creating personae and narratees who expose twentieth-century society's failure to become involved in a process of remedying these societal problems.
IV. New Journalism

By locating The New Journalism within the formal categories of culture and defining it in relation to journalism as a specific cultural mode, the troublesome relationship between "facts" and "fictions" in popular representations can be made more explicit. (Eason 142)

Tom Wolfe, discussing the genre of New Journalism, asserts that one of the main facets that makes the writing so vibrant is the lack of canon. Because canon does not exist within the medium, writers experiment with many devices previously used exclusively by fiction writers. In describing how the genre developed after World War II, Wolfe cites techniques pioneered by various authors in developing a new way to write expository prose including: how writers become factors in the stories, point-of-view variation, short story formats, dialogue, parallel narratives, status details, absurd repetition, unorthodox punctuation and spelling, and the presentation of realism through descriptive sketches.

The magazine interview became the mother of the genre as authors jumped in and actually became factors in their interviews. While discussing Joe Eszterhas' writing, Wolfe comments:

Eszterhas winds up by doing something that, I
think, demonstrates the flexibility of the New Journalism. He suddenly introduces himself, the reporter, as a character. He tells how he came to town, how he dressed up one way to talk to the town's more solid burghers and another way to talk to the freaks. In other words, he suddenly, at the very end, decides to tell you how he put the story together. Far from being like an epilogue or anticlimax, however, the device leads to a denouement of considerable power. (127)

Another important device used by New Journalists is variation on point of view. A fine example of variation is found in Amis' biographical vignette written about novelist William Burroughs where he says: "He does not answer to any of the gods we answer to: he sits up late at night, listening for the knock of The Semiologic Police" (Moronic Inferno 145). Notice the use of the word "we" in the sentence. Who is "we"? Amis is, of course, drawing the narratee into the story and altering the point of view.

Gay Talese was one of the first journalists to experiment with the short story format. As a fan of John O'Hara and Irwin Shaw, Talese wanted to incorporate those writers' techniques into his nonfiction. He abandoned the traditional, historical narrative style and, instead, developed his stories through a series of scenes. The following Amis quotation from his essay "Gay Talese: Sex-
"Affirmative" shows how Amis has adapted this device for his own New Journalism. The scene is set:

The research might have been fun, but the writing was a waste of time [for Thy Neighbor's Wife]. As Mr. Talese naively snoops from porno film-set to massage parlour, from obscenity trial to the offices of Screw magazine, as he talks to "ordinary" troilists, wife-swappers and haggard masturbators, it slowly becomes clear that he has nothing of any interest to say on his chosen subject. Mr. Talese calls this clueless style "non-judgmental"—and he isn't kidding. Out goes judgment, and in comes jargon, stock-response and humourlessness through the same door. . . . Non-Judgmental Talese, however, doesn't "use" this style: it uses him. (Moronic Inferno 184-85)

In few words Amis has created a picture of the usual twentieth-century debauchery he so fervently likes to expose. In addition, he comments on those items he feels are important in effective writing by giving their opposite: lack of judgment, jargon, stock-response, and humorlessness.

Truman Capote developed the idea of parallel narratives in non-fiction. In addition, his work is overly concerned with status details. His best seller In Cold Blood is the true story of a Garden City, Kansas, family who were senselessly murdered. Capote spent six years in this dreary
small town, working on the details for the book. In the end, he writes parallel stories about the murdered wealthy farm family and about the two convicts who murder them. Capote called this work his "non-fiction novel." In Cold Blood provides excellent examples of status details. Amis comments about Capote's thinking:

Capote became convinced that an unnoticed art form lay concealed within the conventions of journalism: the idea was that a true story could be told, faithfully, but so arranged as to suggest the amplitude of poetic fiction. (Moronic Inferno 35)

Amis uses many of the same devices found in Capote's work. In his novel Success, Amis tells two very involved parallel stories about a rich kid and his adopted brother, stressing status details. In his essay "Truman Capote: Knowing Everybody" Amis stresses status details when speaking about Capote: "There is still something of the erudite hillbilly about him, and this perhaps explains how his obsession with the beau monde co-exists so peacefully with an interest in the underworld of murder and madness." Amis ends his paragraph with the statement: "He gives new scope to the cliche' of 'knowing everyone'" (Moronic Inferno 34).

Norman Mailer is master of autobiographical New Journalism. His best seller The Armies of the Night carries the sub-title History as a Novel: The Novel as History. Like Capote, Mailer deliberately imitates the
novel in his account about the march on the Pentagon in 1967. He was a participant in the event. Therefore, his own passions and personal knowledge add greatly to the power of this narrative.

Amis uses some of the same tactics in his book Einstein's Monsters as Mailer uses in Armies of the Night. Einstein's Monsters contains a carefully researched and highly charged autobiographical essay about nuclear war, and also contains five short stories about what might happen if such devastation really did occur. In this book, Amis has actually combined nonfiction and fiction into one powerful work that makes an effective case for world peace.

Obviously, Amis has carefully studied the style of Joan Didion. He admires her self-revealing, reflective essays:

"Style is character." Or, as Miss Didion puts it:

**Style is character.** If style were character, everyone would write as self-revealingly as Miss Didion. Not everyone does. Miss Didion's style relishes emphasis, repetition, re-emphasis. Her style looks like starting and finishing successive sentences with identical phrases. (Moronic Inferno 165)

Elements of Didion's favorite devices can be found in both Amis' fictive and non-fictive work. Amis uses the device of emphasis and repetition in Einstein's Monsters: "Differences in age aren't easy. Differences of strength aren't easy.
Friendship isn't easy" (45).

Narrative techniques should not be considered the
guarded private property of either New Journalism or fiction
because they can be used effectively in many situations to
describe accurately the action occurring in both genres;
they can be used to explain culture to society as it exists.
David Eason states:

A culture can be defined as the totality of
symbolic forms, which a society makes available
for understanding experience. Cultural forms such
as science, religion, history and journalism
organize experience by providing a particular
perspective or "frame" for seeing and knowing the
world, and by establishing conventions and
standards of expectation for communicating
knowledge. (143)

"Cultural forms function like languages." Unlike its cousin
traditional journalism, New Journalism prefers symbol over
sign (metaphor over metonymy). Eason states: "New
Journalism calls attention to itself as symbolic
construction, similar to but distinct from the events it
signifies" (145). Since the standard cultural forms of
science, religion, history, and journalism are part of the
status quo and because Amis feels these forms are falling
apart and no longer effective, Amis sets himself outside the
limits of their boundaries and effectively establishes his
own set of rules to raise society's awareness level. His tactic is to influence his real reader by presenting an accessible persona and an accessible narratee.

A very distinct difference between traditional journalism and New Journalism is that the traditionalist does not discuss his/her personal relationship to the event, but instead tries to appear objective, while the New Journalist involves himself/herself directly in the event and feels no compunction about reporting subjectively.

Amis' essay "The Case of Claus von Bulow" provides an excellent example of how Amis forge ahead subjectively—giving his personal reflections through his persona directly to the narratee about von Bulow's character:

'Claus Bulow--born Claus Borberg and yet to invent the "von"--was a middle-class Danish adventurer. His father was practically the only Dane to be prosecuted for collaboration with the Nazis. That'll give you some idea. As far back as his London days Claus was always shady. He stood bail for Stephen Ward during the Profumo scandal. He hung around with Lord Lucan--now there's another man who bungled the murder of his wife. (Moronic Inferno 23)

The line "That'll give you some idea" directly prejudices the narratee. In this passage, Amis is using his normally sarcastic tone to establish his disdain for von Bulow. He
indicates that von Bulow is guilty by comparing him to another wife murderer.

The following passage by Eason might have been expressly written about Amis:

Whereas routine journalism tries to reduce the distance between report and referent in order to make the report appear transparent, New Journalism points reflexively to its own mode of production. As the attention to technique attests, New Journalism calls attention to itself as both a report of an actual situation and as a mode of discourse which exists in relation to other modes such as classical novel and routine journalism.

Amis clearly has "established a mode of discourse" involving his persona, his narratee, and his real reader. No transparency is available for the audience to determine if some major factors may be missing from the account Amis produces about the poisoning of Martha "Sunny" von Bulow.

Reporters in search of a way to create interesting and clever nonfiction have created a new art form without the artificially imposed rules of punctuation, point-of-view, chronological narration, and dialogue traditionally assigned to the essay. Martin Amis' nonfiction work is certainly part of the relatively new and growing genre of New Journalism.
V. The Postmodernist/New Journalist Overlap

As to journalism, we may as well grant right away that there is no such thing as absolute objectivity. It is impossible to present in words "the truth" or "the whole story." The minute a writer offers nine hundred ninety-nine out of one thousand facts, the worm of bias has begun to wriggle. The vision of each witness is particular. Tolstoy pointed out that immediately after a battle there are as many remembered versions of it as there have been participants. (Hersey 289-90)

In his book Style As Argument, Chris Anderson comments about the devices used by Wolfe, Capote, Mailer, and Didion that create the overlap between postmodernist fiction and New Journalism. Interestingly, Amis is also fascinated by these same authors and their stylistics. In addition, Amis is intrigued by the work of postmodern fiction writers Saul Bellow and Kurt Vonnegut and dissects their styles himself in his book The Moronic Inferno. Amis' own unique writing demonstrates a keen understanding of these stylistics and his adaptation of them into both his fiction and nonfiction.

John Hersey believes that New Journalists have gone overboard in their pursuit of the ultimate nonfiction novel, and Ihab Hassan believes that the postmodernist non-
fiction novel is an ingrained part of our culture. Tom Wolfe explains carefully how New Journalists and late twentieth-century novelists overlap in the techniques they use. By closely examining the stylistic devices Amis employs to develop both his fictive and non-fictive prose—against the backdrop of Hersey, Hassan, Anderson, Prince, and Wolfe's commentaries—one is able to notice an obvious overlapping between the characteristics of Amis' personae and of his narratees in both his journalistic adventures and his wild fiction. Amis' writing becomes a perfect bridge between fiction and nonfiction.

Hersey asserts, "I have always believed that the devices of fiction could serve journalism well and might even help it to aspire now and then to the level of art." However, Hersey adamantly denounces the trend of merging journalism and fiction:

But I have tried to honor the distinction between the two forms. To claim that a work is both fiction and journalism, or to assert, as Doctorow recently did, that "there is no longer any such thing as fiction or nonfiction; there is only narrative"—these are, in my view, serious crimes against the public. (289)

If Hersey's views are accepted as those of the antagonist in the ongoing debate between scholars and critics about the validity of overlapping the stylistics used to create
contemporary fiction and nonfiction, then Amis can be accepted as the protagonist who carefully studies and skillfully incorporates every fictional stylistic device available into his nonfiction.

Scene-by-scene construction, dialogue, point-of-view, and status details are the major stylistic devices New Journalists borrow from fiction writers to captivate their audiences. In addition, New Journalists play with language and punctuation in new and exciting ways. The Ms. Grundys of the world probably recoil in horror when they pick up the work of Wolfe or Mailer or Capote or Didion or Amis because these writers simply refuse to follow traditional rules.

Postmodernist fiction writers use exactly the same techniques as the New Journalists. They are also on many hit-lists for their deviation from traditional fiction models—they play with time in scene-by-scene construction, play with duality, play with point-of-view, play with language, and play with the reader by use of the narratee.

Amis traveled to Chicago on several different occasions to meet Bellow, with the idea of finding out what made him, as Amis says, "a great American writer." Amis comments: "I think that in a sense he is the writer that the Twentieth Century has been waiting for" (Moronic Inferno 200). Amis is intrigued by Bellow's abilities of looking into his own psyche, analyzing his own feelings, and making sense out of nonsense. He contends that Bellow writes in "High Style."
Northrop Frye says: "Genuine high style is ordinary style, or even low style, in an exceptional situation which gives it exceptional authority" (45). Proof that Amis strives for "High Style" is evidenced in all of his writing (both fictive and nonfictive).

Amis interviewed Kurt Vonnegut for an Observer article in 1983, and Amis' obvious admiration for Vonnegut's stylistics is apparent throughout the article. He quotes Vonnegut as saying that, as a writer, he is "a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterisation and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations" (Moronic Inferno 137). Stylistic techniques used by Vonnegut in his postmodernist novel Breakfast of Champions are found in Amis' work. One excellent example of similarity is when Vonnegut puts his narrative persona (author Philboyd Studge) into the position of actually meeting character Kilgore Trout. Vonnegut tells Trout:

"Mr. Trout," I said, "I am a novelist, and I created you for use in my books."

"I'm your Creator," I said. "You're in the middle of a book right now--close to the end of it, actually." (299)

In Money, John Self meets with Martin Amis regularly:

I was just sitting there, not stirring, not even breathing, like the pub's pet reptile, when who should sit down opposite me but that guy Martin
Amis, the writer. (85)
The meeting between author and persona has the effect of drawing the reader into the narrative in a very personal way. Vonnegut is using the same device New Journalists use when they become a character in the narrative. Amis comments on his own presence in—and the reasoning behind—involving himself in the narrative:

[Amis] is there as a foil to the main character. The main character, the narrator [persona], has no cultural sustenance whatever in his life, and that's why he's in the predicament and the bad state he's in. Partly to taunt the narrator, I drew myself as someone who buckles down to a little roster of hard work and cultural sustenance every day. (Smith 79)
The idea of the author becoming a character is not limited to postmodernist fiction; New Journalists also use this device. Notable examples of this technique are found in the writings of Rex Reed ("Do You Sleep in the Nude?"), Michael Herr ("Khesanh"), and Joe Eszterhas ("Charlie Simpson's Apocalypse").

Tom Wolfe relies on language to develop his scene-by-scene reconstruction. Anderson says: "He seems to delight in wringing out the rhetorical possibilities of words" (8). Anderson uses examples of Wolfe's pushing the "outside of the envelope of language" (9) as he quotes Wolfe's setting
the scene in Las Vegas (The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby):

. . . "inevitable buttocks decolletage" of the "ack-ack" girls in their "incarnadine stretch pants," soaring, swiveling, oscillating neon signs. Las Vegas has "succeeded in wiring an entire city with this electronic stimulation day and night, out in the middle of the desert." (10) Amis uses the same technique in painting a picture of Palm Beach:

The only road-accidents in Palm Beach take place between pedestrians. And you can see them happening a mile off. The mottled, golf-trousered oldsters square up to each other on pavement and zebra, and head forward, inexorably, like slow-motion stock-cars or distressed supertankers. (Everyone is pretty sleek and rounded in Palm Beach—unlike New York, where people's faces are as thin as credit cards.) (Moronic Inferno 74)

Capote is best known for pioneering the nonfiction novel (In Cold Blood). Hersey praises the work as a novel but contends the work has "serious flaws on the nonfiction side, arising from the fact that its actions and dialogue had been reconstructed long after the described events" occurred (291). Hersey believes Capote is dishonest to authenticate with quotation marks dialogue written from such
a great distance. The question he poses is: How can the dialogue be truthful when written in this manner? Amis, along with almost all other postmodern novelists and New Journalists, depends on dialogue to move his narrative forward. Hersey's question becomes subjective and dependent on the answers to many other questions. Did the author edit the dialogue? Did the author create the dialogue?

Anderson asserts that the most important contribution to the genre of New Journalism made by Capote is his use of "authorial silence." Anderson makes his point by stating: "Capote's nonfiction is like his fiction in what it does not say, and this is true not only in In Cold Blood but in all the other major nonfiction as well" (48). By establishing his persona as the questioner, Capote withholds information and does not provide interpretation of the text. Therefore, the "reader is left to draw inferences and make connections" (49). Amis' texts also play with the reader in the same way. In his essay "Gloria Steinem and the Feminine Utopia," Amis asks:

Do all these people actually have a human potential? Don't we need the norms? How much variety can society contain? How much can it stand?

Feminism is a salutary challenge to one's assumptions about feminism. I wonder, though, how much it has to offer as an all-informing
idea. And is the racial analogy, so often claimed, really fully earned? (Moronic Inferno 142)

Prince's assertions about the specific narratee as being the questioner are well defined in context of the foregoing quote. By questioning, the persona is manipulating the narratee and allowing the reader to "make connections."

Wolfe uses manipulation of point-of-view and stream-of-consciousness techniques to provide minute-by-minute scene changes in his essays. Amis is a master of point-of-view changes as shown in the following example from his work The Rachael Papers:

"Oh no. I know what's going to happen. You're going to walk out of here in a minute and I'll never see you again."

Who can say how I got through the weekend? My heart really goes out to me there.

Charles listened to the car drive away and walked up the stairs like a senile heavyweight.

"Seven o'clock," his watch told him. (138)

Notice that the first piece of dialogue has Charles (the persona) speaking to his girlfriend Rachael in the first person. Next, a hiatus occurs. After the hiatus, the persona is thinking in stream-of-consciousness during the first paragraph. Abruptly, the second paragraph switches
to a third person point of view—the persona Charles is talking about the character Charles. This type of reader manipulation occurs in all of Amis' writing.

Anderson says the "grammar of" Didion's writing is "the grammar of radical particularity" and "the rhetoric of her prose is the rhetoric of concreteness and implication, symbol and gap, process and struggle" (134). Notice how Amis uses this same type of rhetoric in the following quotation from his essay "NUKE CITY: Wake up, America, to another sunny doomsday in Washington, District of Catastrophe":

Nuclear weapons are everything and nothing. This is their genius. On the one hand they are bargaining chips, pawns in a propaganda contest, peace-keepers—mutually canceling. They are nothing. On the other hand they multiply by the speed-of-light squared; they deal in tons of blood and rubble. They are everything, because they can destroy everything. (Moronic Inferno 100)

Hersey must have been chagrined if he read Esquire's caption for "NUKE CITY"—"Documentary." The language in the title alone provides a slant that already has removed the narrative from the realm of what the average citizen would consider "objective news" and places the article in the realm of "subjective news." Notice how Amis is using the same rhetorical techniques frequently used by Didion:
concreteness, implication, symbol, gap, process, and struggle.

A striking resemblance can be found between the theme Amis uses in his essay "NUKE CITY" and the themes Mailer develops in his work. Anderson asserts:

Throughout his work Mailer is obsessed with the idea of sublimity and apocalypse. He needs to see his subject as beyond the threshold of the ordinary and everyday and to see himself in the act of challenging that limit. (82)

All of Amis' writing is concerned with some type of apocalypse: personal, societal, or governmental. In Money, the apocalypse is a breakdown of personal, societal, and governmental morality through late-twentieth-century society's obsession with material goods: in Einstein's Monsters, the apocalypse is nuclear war; in The Rachael Papers, the apocalypse is adulthood; and in The Moronic Inferno, the apocalypse is American lunacy.

Amis obviously enjoys the spectacle of reality that New Journalists promote by using radical language. In his description of Mailer, Amis says:

This is the Existential Hero, the Philosopher of Hip, the Chauvinist Pig, the Psychic Investigator, the Prisoner of Sex. For thirty years Mailer has been the cosseted superbrat of American letters. It has taken him quite a while to grow up. But
the process has made for a fascinating spectacle. (Moronic Inferno 59)

Well, if Amis thinks Mailer has a bad reputation, what does he think of his own? In an article written for Esquire, "Britain's Brat of Letters," Charles Michener quotes three of Amis' fellow countrymen:

"Martin Amis is a little shit."--an English novelist who does not wish to be identified.

"He is a little shit."--an English literary agent who does not wish to be identified.

"He is a little shit."--an English television producer who does not wish to be identified. (108)

And then Michener follows the quotes with this statement:

After a while it begins to sound like a nursery rhyme. Martin Amis--bashing hasn't quite become the national sport over here, but in the insular, incestuous London literary world and its journalistic fringes, it has become something of a reflex. (108)

The comparison between Mailer and Amis is quite striking; both have terrible reputations, both have unlimited vigor spurting from their pens, both use vulgarity profusely, both play "Crusader Rabbit," both write nonfiction in fictional format, and both are referred to as a "brat of letters."

Wolfe is "fascinated with the insider's slang, the
power words of the privileged groups and underground cultures he seeks out" (Anderson 9). Wolfe discusses how he plays with groupie language in his essays "Radical Chic" and "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers":

In both stories I also depended heavily on details of status life to try to draw the reader inside the emotional life of the characters. I enjoyed the contrast created by drawing these details largely from the top of the social scale in "Radical Chic" and from the bottom in "Mau-Mauing the Flak Catchers. . . . I tried to capture the precious tones that still prevail. . . . (377)

Throughout Amis' fiction and nonfiction alike, status details predominate. In Money, John Self describes an encounter with a Los Angeles prostitute:

Then the door behind my head jerked open, the car light came on like a flashbulb, and there was a seven-foot black pimp snarling down at me with a mahogany baseball bat in his fist.

- Well, you don't ever feel more naked than that. No—you never do. Something about the bat itself, the resined or saddlesoaped grain of its surface, offered unwelcome clarity, reminding me why I had stayed away from Scheld's and the sweet black chicks and their bargain blowjobs. This is all very serious and violent and criminal and
mean. You cannot go slumming, not here, because slums bite back. (159)

A nonfiction example of status details is found in *The Moronic Inferno* as Amis describes Gore Vidal:

Novelist, essayist, dramatist, epigrammist, television polemicist, controversialist, pansexualist, socialist, and socialite: if there is a key to Gore Vidal's public character, it has something to do with his towering immodesty, the enjoyable superbity of his self-love. (97)

These two examples of Amis' preoccupation with status demonstrate how he is able to define the social caste of his subjects in a few well-chosen words. John Self is obviously slumming and is inherently superior to the pimp and prostitute; and Gore Vidal is a homosexual socialist who is accepted by high society and feels superior about his status.

Discussing the subject of class, Hersey states that "Understatement is upper class" and that a "consequence of such understandings is the central disaster of this gifted writer's [Wolfe] voice: He never abandons a resolute tone of screaming" (299). Like Wolfe, Amis screams in all of his works.

If both postmodern novelists and New Journalists rely on the stylistic devices of altering point-of-view, stream-of-consciousness, dialogue, narrator-narratee manipulation,
scene-by-scene construction, authoritative silence, and status details to define their respective genres, then New Journalism must fall into the category of postmodernism. Wolfe contends that New Journalism is the wave of the future when he says:

Not only is the New Journalism the first new direction in American literature in the last fifty years, but it was started mainly by writers in their thirties... In most cases the New Journalism has been something that the writer has arrived at after spending years at another form of writing. Only now are large numbers of young writers beginning to aim straight toward the New Journalism from the outset. (55)

Postmodernism, like New Journalism, attracts competent writers interested in dealing with "reality" as they perceive it. Their subjects are the bizarre societal flaws and neurotic citizens of the late Twentieth Century.
VI. Conclusion

Authentically corrupt, seriously vulgar, intensely twentieth century, she will always be the ghost writer of my poor pornography. . . . (Money 319)

Martin Amis provides a transitional bridge between postmodernist fiction and New Journalism by demonstrating how the fictional stylistic devices of the novel can be successfully replicated in nonfiction through the use of the narrative persona. Amis' work Einstein's Monsters is an unusual book because it contains a non-fiction essay presented in first person narrative and four short stories about the same subject (atomic holocaust) also presented in first person. This work demonstrates the consistency of narrative style that predominates all of Amis' writing--fictive and nonfictive. His essay reports:

What am I to do with thoughts like these? What is anyone to do with thoughts like these?

 Everywhere you look there is great irony: tragic irony, pathetic irony, even the irony that is simply violent, unprecedentedly violent. The mushroom cloud above Hiroshima was a beautiful spectacle, even though it owed its color to a kiloton of human blood. . . .

In the discursive sphere there are several
ways of writing badly about nuclear weapons. Some people, you finally conclude, just don't get it. They just don't get it. They are published versions of those bus-stop raconteurs who claim that nuclear war won't be "that bad," especially if they can make it down to their aunt's cottage in Dorset. They do not see the way nuclear weapons put everything into italic capitals. Failing to get the point about nuclear weapons is like failing to get the point about human life. This, in fact, is the basis of our difficulty. (4-5)

These paragraphs demonstrate many of the postmodern novelistic devices used by New Journalists. Searching for a new reality is the basic ingredient of postmodernist literature. In the first partial paragraph the narrator is questioning the narratee: how can I deal with my negative feelings about atomic warfare? By the persona making the narratee a participant, the real reader is also forced to respond personally. Then a hiatus appears on the page—demonstrating the manipulation of punctuation devices. The second paragraph also draws the narratee into the narrative by the use of the word "you."

Since words are not reality, but only a way to define it, the persona uses repetition to intensify the narratee's response. Look at the repeated use of the words "irony" and
violent." Also, look at the allusions to writing: "writing" and "published" and "italic capitals." These allusions to nuclear arms proponents' use of rhetoric define Amis' awareness of the power of the pen.

Solipsism is a philosophy devoted to the idea that there is no reality but that which is within one's self or that which is verifiable by self. Amis is clearly indicating that "they" do not understand the seriousness and "reality" of problems the nuclear arms race creates for mankind because of "their" solipsism. Only the persona and the narratee (who is a creation of the persona) are aware of the impending holocaust. The passage also demonstrates Amis' belief that late twentieth century society is preoccupied with the self—otherwise people would be concerned about the dangers of engaging in nuclear war (even if they did escape to their aunt's cottage in Dorset).

Notice the use of authorial silence in the passage; no reference is given to what is the "great irony, the pathetic irony, even the irony that is simply violent, unprecedentedly violent." The "real" reader must come up with the definition of this irony. In addition, Amis refers to "some people" without specifying their identities. Therefore, the reader is required to conjure up his/her own interpretation of who the "some people" are Amis is talking about.

Frye asks the question: "What is high style?" After
explaining the presence of two types of high style—"one for literature and another for ordinary speech" (44)—Frye then says that high style in literature occurs when the written word connects with the reader on a level of active participation and deals with an "ethical factor"—love, loyalty, reverence, et cetera—"which the term sublime expresses" (102). Furthermore, he states:

In ordinary speech high style is something else. I should say that it emerges whenever the middle style rises from communication to community, and achieves a vision of society which draws speaker and hearers together into a closer bond. It is the voice of the genuine individual reminding us of our genuine selves, and of our role as members of a society, in contrast to a mob. (44)

Amis' fiction and nonfiction can both be called "high style" because—in the case of ordinary spoken high style—his work clearly demonstrates a "voice [the persona] of the genuine individual reminding us of our genuine selves."

Einstein's Monsters is genuine high style because Amis' technique of using postmodern fictional devices makes the real reader understand how vitally important the issue of social consciousness is in relationship to our own survival on planet earth.

Since the postmodernist is desperately searching to define reality in ways that bring new understanding about
the world in which we live, a conclusion that can be drawn about New Journalists Wolfe, Mailer, Capote, Didion, and Amis—who are also searching for new ways to define reality—is that they have adapted their nonfictive writing styles to fit the mold of postmodernism and have raised the genre of New Journalism to the status of "art."

And specifically, Amis' use of the narrative persona and narratee, dialogue, point-of-view, stream-of-consciousness, parallel narrative, authorial silence and status details, bridges postmodern fiction and nonfiction by demonstrating how New Journalists and postmodern novelists use identical stylistic devices in creating their art.
Works Cited


