

摘要

《金钱——绝命书》(1984)是英国当代文坛巨匠马丁·艾米斯(1949-2023)的代表作之一,再现了二十世纪末英美两国的社会文化概况。其中丰富的身体书写体现了艾米斯以身体介入社会现实的创作意识,渗透着对当代人生存境遇的深切忧思。本文以身体为切入点,通过呈现身体由困境走向复兴的历程,探讨身体与消费、权力、两性问题的复杂关系,阐释艾米斯的生命关怀。

第一章分析了消费主义下被异化的身体。消费带来了丰盛的物品、便利的技术和奢侈的生活,身体成为个体恣意享乐的直接场域,但也同时背负了生态恶化、技术控制和精神迷失的潜在风险。身体与自然、他人和自我不断分离,表现为中毒的身体,机械化的身体和分裂的身体,走上了异化的道路。

第二章探讨了资本主义父权制下被客体化的身体。后现代消费社会中,父权制与资本主义的合谋势不可挡,两性关系陷入了扭曲的泥沼。女性身体沦为施暴对象和廉价商品。男性身体在权力巩固中饱受折磨,焦虑、身体功能障碍和情感缺失成为常态。整个社会文化也在资本主义父权意识形态的渗透下呈现淫秽化,身体意象走向堕落。

第三章剖析了对抗当代身体困境的真实身体。作者马丁·艾米斯运用元小说创作技巧介入文本,消解虚拟与现实界限的同时,救赎主人公,传递回归真实生命体验的身体观。玛蒂娜作为作者的女性化身,践行绿色的生活方式,并以自身力量引导塞尔夫,代表与万物和谐共处的生态身体。马丁作为作者的男性化身,始终以独到的智慧参与生活,并与塞尔夫展开严肃对话,挫败其金钱和色情幻想,代表身心交融的认知身体。塞尔夫最终远离外界诱惑,开启崭新的生活,成为重新觉醒的身体。

结论部分指出,艾米斯以身体困境批判消费主义猖獗和两性关系扭曲等社会问题对个体生存的威胁。同时,艾米斯将这些重大命题的思考延展至生命关怀本身,言说了现代人实现身体解放的可能性,鼓励人们回归真实的生命体验,构建身体的主体性,能动性和认知性,以此实现身体复兴。

关键词: 马丁·艾米斯 《金钱——绝命书》 身体书写

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Introduction

Martin Amis (1949-2023) is considered as one of the most influential postmodern satirists. His audacious disclosure of malevolence and highly experimental narrative skills bring him much attention and set him a paradigm for other avant-garde writers. His creations often cover a wide range of subjects, including money worship, global environmental issues, the holocaust, nuclear crisis, gender relations and so on. *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984) (Hereinafter referred to as *Money*) is regarded as the pinnacle of his literary creation and caricature of the entire Western society during the 1980s. This part encapsulates a brief introduction to Martin Amis and *Money*, enumerates researches both at home and abroad on the novel and elucidates theoretical framework and significance of the study.

A. Introduction to Martin Amis and *Money: A Suicide Note*

1. Introduction to Martin Amis

Martin Amis, born on August 25, 1949, is the second son of Kingsley Amis (1922-1995), a famous British writer, who gains reputation with *Lucky Jim* (1954) and remains as the representative of the “Angry Young Men”. Despite being raised in a literary environment, Amis experienced a tumultuous childhood due to his parents’ frequent moving. The divorce of his parents brought him great inner torment. His psychological trauma didn’t alleviate until he encountered his stepmother, Elizabeth Jane Howard, “who persuaded the teenage Martin to turn from comic books and video games to serious reading”¹. Under Howard’s tutelage and his own determination, he gained admission to Oxford University like his father and graduated with first-class honors in the field of literature.

Upon completion of his studies, he secured a position as a writer of book reviews and essays for esteemed British publications including the *London Observer*, *Times Literary Supplement*, and *New Statesman*. He has acquired a profound understanding of the literary world and honed a precise grasp of language through his professional

work, establishing a strong groundwork for his literary aspirations. In 1973, he published his first novel *The Rachel Papers* and won the Somerset Maugham Award. Over the course of the ensuing years, the talented writer diligently honed his literary skills and successfully published three additional novels, namely *Dead Babies* (1975), *Success* (1978), and *Other People* (1981).

In 1979, he made the decision to resign from his profession and became a full-time writer. Martin Amis holds great admiration for prominent writers including Vladimir Nabokov, James Joyce, Saul Bellow and Charles Dickens, regarding them as his literary influence. He also considers Saul Bellow to be his “surrogate literary father”. Of course, his father also exerts a profound influence on his literary creation. But although the literary father and son shares similar learning experience and literary passion, their writing style diverges significantly. Kingsley Amis adheres to traditional realistic forms in his writing. Martin Amis, by contrast, excels in utilizing unconventional and innovative postmodern techniques, including stream-of-consciousness, irony, parody, dark humor, metafiction and duplicity. Despite the existence of literary dissent and familial competition between Kingsley and Martin, “playful rivalry energized their work and their lives.”²

Throughout his writing career, he not only released fifteen novels, three collections of short stories and eight non-fiction books, but also compilations of essays and two screenplays in total. There is no doubt that Martin Amis is a productive writer. Amis’s literary insight and stylistic virtuosity have influenced numerous British novelists of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, including Will Self and Zadie Smith. As a “celebrity writer”, his private life rather than talent often falls prey to the scrutiny of tabloid journalists, which also earns him the notoriety of “the bad boy of English fiction”. But he consistently conveys his moral conscience as a public intellectual and diagnoses deeply-rooted social problems in Western capitalist society during his era through outspoken exposure and criticism.

2. Introduction to *Money: A Suicide Note*

Money is known as one of “London triptych”, together with *London Fields* (1989) and *The Information* (1996). It is inspired by Amis’s participation in the production of

the film *Saturn 3* as a scriptwriter. After publication, on the one hand, *Money* has been subject to controversies due to its appalling nakedness of nastiness. On the other hand, it is also recommended by many critics because of “a liberal humanist kernel beneath this hard narrative nut”³. James Diedrick sings high praise of *Money* and thinks it “represents a highwater mark in Amis’s career”⁴. Gavin Keulks also believes: “When Martin released *Money* to great critical acclaim, there seemed little doubt about which Amis’s star was in ascendancy.”⁵ Despite the polarizing reviews, *Money* remains widely acknowledged as an exemplary literary work that masterfully encapsulates the zeitgeist of Reagan-Thatcher period. In May 2010, *Money* underwent a notable transformation into a compelling two-hour television series aired on the BBC network. This adaptation serves as a testament to the enduring value and rich connotation of *Money* even after decades.

Money is narrated in the first person by John Self, a television commercial advertiser who is addicted to alcohol, fast food, fighting and masturbation. The story revolves around Self shuttling between London and New York to make his first film. Self is the epitome of excessive lifestyle. In daily life, he indulges in the carnival of money and pornography to the extreme at the cost of physical health and conscious awareness. At last, he is deceived by his cooperative partner Fielding and pay for his foolish behaviors. What he has experienced is nothing but a “money conspiracy” lack of motivation. Sometimes he also vacillates between self-degradation and self-improvement for he meets two “surrogate writers”, Martina Twain and “Martin Amis”. They offer him moral redemption from different aspects. Martina guides him to reestablish a organic connection with nature and others. But he still cannot resist pornographic temptation and gives up his “metamorphosis” halfway. Then Martin destroys his money and pornographic obsession by disclosing the truth of the trick and driving him to ruin. After the failure of committing suicide, he gets a clear comprehension of money and distract his attention to other beneficial activities. He learns to change his bad habits, recognizes his real father and gets along well with his new girlfriend. In some sense, John Self embarks on the journey of his new life.

As a matter of fact, the emergence of *Money* cannot separate with its macro social

context. It mirrors the economic, political and cultural conditions of both Britain and America at the end of the 20th century. In the 1970s, both Britain and America suffered from serious economic crisis, with rising inflation, increasing unemployment, and imbalances in the balance of payments. Faced with the crisis of stagflation, Regan and Thatcher formally came to power and began to carry out drastic reforms.

In economy, Reagan and Thatcher maintained the neoliberal theory of free market economics. They resorted to monetarist policies to fight inflation by slashing public spending and raising interest rates. What's more, Thatcher pursued a policy of privatization by selling shares in state-owned companies and reducing state intervention in business so as to construct a nation of capitalists. Although the free market economic policy has helped Britain and America temporarily avoid economic recession, it also brings unavoidable negative effects. The relaxation of government regulation over the market announced the surrender of government power to capital, so the government became an instrument of financial oligarchy for huge economic gains. What's more, the liberalization of financial capital made it gradually out of control. The highly profitable virtual wealth created by financial derivatives redirected many private entities to virtual investments, resulting in a serious imbalance between the real economy and the virtual economy, which has laid a hidden danger for economic crisis and long-term stagnation. What's worse, under the influence of neoliberalism, individualism and philistinism took the place of Keynesian-based collectivism and cooperation, which induced the fracture of society and the lack of a sense of wholeness, and made people become moral losers who were money-oriented.

Supreme materialism and "amusing ourselves to death" presented in *Money* has become a common social disease in both Britain and America at this time. Amis had condemned her monetary policy and thought "it's really a 'live now, pay later' thing."⁶

In politics, the Regan and Thatcher government reduced the power of the trade unions and took forceful measures to defeat them. While the government greatly weakened the power of trade unions, it did not take other measures to make up for the protective role of trade unions for the working class and the lower income groups, which directly led to the deterioration of the living conditions of the British working

class and the intensified contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the working class. In terms of tax system, the British and American governments believed in “trickle-down effect”, so they greatly reduced taxes, especially the personal income tax of the rich. They believed that social wealth would have a natural leakage process, and social equality could be achieved without government intervention in distribution. But the tax cuts alone favored the rich from the start. The trickle-down effect didn't bring shared prosperity, but increased social disparity. There was a “negative trickle-down effect” in which the wealth of the poor shrunk and the wealth of the poor penetrated back to the rich. Additionally, they also weakened the welfare system by advocating the development of private clinics and freezing student grants, which signified the disintegration of social security. All these measures have come at the expense of equity, resulting in unemployment of a large number of working class and underclass, an unprecedented disparity between the rich and the poor and frequent social unrest. The large number of homeless poor, the frequent riots in London and the ubiquitous violent crimes in *Money* are Amis's reflection on the political initiatives of the Reagan-Thatcher era and his focus on the living condition of the plagued.

In culture, the highly commercialized social atmosphere leads to the trend of high vulgarity in culture. The boundary between mass culture and high culture is deconstructed. The marginalization of high literature and the marketization of mass culture have become an irreversible trend in the development of British and American society. Serious literature has lost its foothold and become a vassal of commercial culture. This phenomenon of cultural commercialization reflects a serious dislocation between social development and cultural inheritance, resulting in people losing their sense of identity with national culture. In *Money*, the degeneration of Shakespeare's image serves as the testament that people are turning their attention from serious literature to entertainment. What's more, behind the decline of Shakespeare image was the reversal of political power in Britain and America in the 1980s, with American culture attacking the position of British culture. When Self shuttles from London to New York to shoot his film, New York symbolizes wealth and power. The sharp contrast between Self's lethargy in London and his energy in New York implies American-

centered globalization and the decline of the British Empire. Britain's cultural dependence on the United States and the intervention of American culture in British culture have seriously eroded the British national culture. In addition, Thatcher re-promoted "Victorian values" to construct the connection between the present and the past so as to unite the British people by evoking nostalgia for the glory of the old empire. The revival of Victorian values also influenced literary creation. Some writers began to return to Victorian classics in both theme and form. But the frequent return to the classics also lead to a stagnation in literary innovation, and Victorian values also had mismatched with contemporary British society. Therefore, many young serious writers began to rebel on the basis in an attempt to show their creative Englishness as distinct from that of their predecessors. They did not confine to the realistic tradition, but carried out postmodern experimental innovation in form or narrative. "Stylistic promiscuity" appeared frequently in creation. This explains the complex narrative structure of *Money*.

B. Literature review

1. Research abroad

Martin Amis has been a focal point of discussion within the realms of British and American literature for the past two decades. The scholarly discourse surrounding Martin Amis encompasses over twenty monographs, with nine of them being exclusively dedicated to the exploration of his works, while the remaining publications touch upon his contributions in specific chapters. Nicolas Tredell briefly introduces Martin Amis and provides a detailed analysis of his eleven works before the millennium in *The Fiction of Martin Amis: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2000). John Dern focuses on the interpretation of Amis's postmodern creation skills in his works, such as unreliable narrative, first-person plural and author intrusion in *Martians, Monsters and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (2000). Gavin Keulks has been studying Martin Amis and published two monographs on him so far. Keulks explains their genealogical dissent and compares their similarities and differences in literature in *Father & Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis and the British*

Novel Since 1950s (2003), offering a better chance to approach the father-son pair. Four years later, he collects 12 important essays written by experts from 6 different countries to optimize readers' comprehension and show Amis's worldwide influence in *Martin Amis: Postmodernism and Beyond* (2007). James Diedrick conducts a comprehensive interpretation on themes of his works from *The Rachel Papers* to *Yellow Dog in Understanding Martin Amis* (2004). Brian Finney introduces Amis's life and works and collects a large number of critical responses to his works in *Martin Amis* (2008). Neil Powell focuses on the analysis of different life experience and works of two generations of the literary giants, which helps readers better understand the entanglement of the literary father and son under their respective social and political context in *Amis & son: two literary generations* (2008). Richard Bradford provides a comprehensive account of major events in Amis's formative years and sheds light on his profound literary encounters in *Martin Amis the Autobiography* (2011). To craft this autobiography, Bradford has engaged in extensive in-person dialogues with Amis, exploring topics that encompassed his writer father, nuclear weapons, global warming and literature. Nick Bentley analyzes Martin Amis and his works from the perspective of his father-son relationship, class dynamics, metafictional techniques, millennial creations and mid-life crises in *Martin Amis* (2015). These monographs provide valuable resources for the investigation and comprehension of Martin Amis and his literary creations.

Apart from these monographs, there are also a wide range of dissertations and journal articles about Martin Amis and *Money*. Their researches can be roughly divided into the following aspects: the critique of capitalism, Thatcherism, pornography, gender studies, allegory and stylistic features.

Firstly, some critics analyze its critique of capitalism. Jon Begley (2004) exposes the decline of Britain in the framework of international capital flows and its three different levels of dialogue to reveal Amis's irony on the carnival culture of postmodern capitalism. Ahmed Badrideen (2017) primarily explores the emergence of positivism within the capitalist society, while also examining the correlation between the protagonist's emotional scarcity and cultural inadequacy within the positivist perspective.

Secondly, some scholars situate *Money* in the macro social context of the Thatcherism during the 1980s. James J. Miracky (2010) directs his attention towards the prevailing social and economic disparities, as well as the widespread media influence during the era of Thatcherism in Britain. He effectively presents the gender construction in the Thatcher era in *The Radiant Way* and *Money* by closely examining their distinctive styles and thematic elements. Joseph Brooker (2012) draws upon the concept of “sado-monetarism” coined by Labour politician Denis Healey to illuminate the profound impact of conflicting ideologies during the Thatcherism period, as depicted in Martin Amis’s *Money* and Alasdair Gray’s *Janine*. Jackson Ayres (2014) primarily delves into Amis’ questioning about rational motivation and critique of the mass culture’s totalitarianism based on Brennan’s insight of the turn, which allows for an interpretation of *Money*’s internal critique of Thatcherism.

Thirdly, other scholars focus on the abundance of pornography in *Money*. Kaye Mitchell (2012) concludes the phenomenon of the “pornification” of culture by conducting a thorough analysis of the interdependent connection between pornography and consumption, as well as the significant impact of pornography on gender dynamics as portrayed in *Money*. Khaled Abkar Alkodimi and Noritah Omar (2012) delve into the insightful analysis of Amis’s satirical portrayal of the exploitation of women’s bodies in the pornographic industry, which is fueled by the mechanisms of capital. In this way they expose the vulnerable position of women in contemporary society, where the forces of patriarchy and capitalism intertwine.

Fourthly, other scholars analyze it from gender studies. Laura L. Doan (1990) explores how class and gender both maintain and shape the prevailing power structure within Amis’s *Money* and Churchill’s *Serious Money*. Emma Parker (2006) employs a queer perspective to critically analyze the gender stereotypes present in the text and uncovers the fluidity and multiplicity of the characters’ identities. Through her analysis, she demonstrates how *Money* effectively subverts the dominant heteropatriarchal norms. Pilip Tew (2006) discusses Amis’s irony on working-class masculinity with Schoene-Harwood’s overview of reflective masculinity, and concludes that Amis subverts heterogeneity by presenting typical males in a state of transformation. According to

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