



The Lyotardian Question of Linkage in *The Information* by Martin Amis

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Abstract

At the heart of freedom, justice, politics, power, and the differend in Lyotard's philosophy, lies the question of linkage, a creative tackling of which makes the real difference since it is the space in which phrases, discourse regimens and finally metanarratives form to give power a chance to be both exerted and resisted. In *The Information*, Martin Amis makes novel choices of phrases and also of the way he links them together so that new implications come to the fore concerning interpersonal power relations on a small scale and metanarratives on a large scale whose determination is the main objective of this library-based study, which can boast of a question few studies, if any, have posed so far and also of a novelty apparent in its detailed, palpable depiction of simple, single events like taking a photo or travelling by air to the status of a little narrative that challenges such metanarratives as Marxism and Capitalism. The story of two authors as rivals stands at the heart of Amis's novel, working as a link that relates micro-components to macro-structures to show how a single move at a local level can disturb titanic structures and also how the position of such enormous structures leaves its definite footprints on the tiniest local components.

Keywords: Amis; Linkage; Lyotard; Metanarrative; Phrase; *The Information*

INTRODUCTION

"In the market-place of ideas", asserts Graham Jones, "an incredible diversity of versions" of postmodernism "have been offered up by theorists, critics and cultural commentators" (Jones, 2014, p.133). Jean Baudrillard, Richard Rorty, Fredric Jameson, and many others are "among the more well-known contributors" (ibid).

Jean Francois Lyotard (1924-98), however, as Jones has also noted, offered a version of the postmodern which, despite its having many features in common with those of the other commentators, is distinguished from them by a

strong tendency to escape "*Periodization*" (ibid, p.134). To put it simply, the postmodern, as Lyotard viewed it, was not bound to a particular time or period; it was not a chronological sequel of a particular movement; nor was it a logical or emotional reaction to some tendency or spirit of the age which could go on for a certain period, and then gradually die down till it was heard of no more. Almost everywhere in his later works, especially *The Postmodern Explained to Children* (1992), Lyotard struggled as hard as he possibly could; to state that the postmodern can still be at work, now and in the future powerfully it has, probably, ever been. His

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definition is capacious enough to support the claim. "Simplifying to the extreme", writes Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition* (1987), "I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1984, p. xxxiii-xxxiv). Metanarratives have probably been there as primordial companions of man and so has incredulity to them, going on perhaps as long as human life has an opportunity to exist on the planet. Thus, as Lyotard defines, postmodernism is not only an antique, universal question, but it also seems to stay with us for untold ages to come.

Metanarratives vitally depend on phrases and linkage in their existence and structure. They impose themselves as indisputable regimes whose into the haphazard and chaotic world of genres of discourse which are, in turn, not only made of phrases and the way they are linked together, but also, "provide 'ends' for the linking of heterogeneous phrases" (Sim, 2011, p.171). Thus, phrases and the way they are linked together are fundamental both in the construction and the collapse of metanarratives and therefore, they are the intersections at which not only various modern metanarratives meet and clash but also the very fundamentals of the modern are debased and dismantled by the postmodern incredulity toward them.

This library-based study is qualitative research that relies on books, journals, articles, and internet databases. The primary sources of its data depend on notes and note-taking as the primary means of data collection.

A close examination of selected passages by Martin Amis shows how his unique choice of phrase and linkage paves the way for a collapse of metanarratives. It also radically alters the game of power on a so-called local or small-scale level.

Lyotardian Phrase and Linkage

The main discussion of phrase and linkage occurs in Lyotard's famous work, *The Differend* (1988). It is perhaps in *The Postmodern Condition* where one should seek the primary occurrence of metanarrative. "The act of phrasing is a central concern of Lyotard's." (Sim, 2011, p.171). However, phrasing and, in particular, the word 'phrase'

can be tricky here. It has little to do with the grammatical Load of meaning it has collected in linguistic circles and publications. Part of the difficulty has been a direct outcome of Lyotard's use of the French term, 'phrase' directly adopted by Lyotard's English translators. A few attempts have been made to find a less-confusing equivalent. Geoffrey Bennington, for instance, prefers "sentence" (Bennington 2008, p.12)

With little success, since that does not discard the grammatical links and connotations, probably due to which it has not gone much popularity, loading later Lyotard scholars and commentators to join the abandoned club again and resort to the old term.

All this said, what is a "phrase"? A phrase is not "a group of words that together have a particular meaning, especially when they express the meaning well in a few words" (Bullon, et al., 2006, p.1143), nor is it "a group of words without a FINITE verb, especially when they are used to form part of a sentence" (ibid, p. 1144), nor yet "a group of words that usually contains a subject and a verb, and expresses a complete idea" (ibid, p. 1394). "It is" instead, as Simon Malpas writes in his *Jean Francois Lyotard*," any case of the transfer of information of any sort." (Malpas, 2003, p.63). It can be an idiom like 'bright-eyed and bushy-tailed'; it may be proverb like 'too many cooks in the kitchen'; it can be a phrase in its strict grammatical sense; it also is an exclamation, a frown, a black look, a smile or as Lyotard says, the meaning" presented by the tail of a cat" (Lyotard, 1988, p.140). However, one should notice that meaning is not transferred exclusively through words, sentences, phrases, meaningful sound one makes in exclamation, surprise, etc., or meaningful body turns and twists known as body language. *Zero transfer* of information can at times be loaded with meaning. As Lyotard puts it, using different wording, even" silence makes a phrase" (ibid, p.ix). In an attempt to explain Lyotard's point, Malpas writes: "a refusal or inability to speak or respond means something." (Malpas, 2003, p.63).

A phrase, however, does not occur in a void. No phrase "is an island" to borrow John

Donne's wording. It is always chained, at four points at least, to *the context* in which it occurs, or as Lyotard would prefer to call it, the "Phrase universe" (Lyotard, 1988, p.14), which functions instead as a living ecosystem that enables the phrase to be in an incessant transaction with at least four other parts: the addressor, namely the origin or source of the phrase which is, not always, but usually a human being who communicates a meaning; the addressee or the target that is addressed by the phrase and to whom or to which it is made; the referent which can be an object, an event, a state, an animal, or a human being about which the phrase is and to which it refers and finally, the sense which is the meaning. That the address of conveys to the addressee about the referent. In Lyotard's philosophy universe, these four are far from independent, fixed, separate or mechanical. Instead, a living, inclusive milieu brings and binds them together. They are constantly shuffled and reshuffled as a new instance of a phrase occurs.

Each short gestation of a phrase universe which, according to Lyotard, "consists in the situating of these instances concerning each other" (Lyotard, 1988, p.14), is a spare every nook and cranny of which power relations and a struggle for dominance permeate, what Lyotard would call "politics" and should be viewed "ultimately... as a struggle between little and grand narratives" (Sim,2011, p.176). Moreover, the struggle possible is the rich potential for an unlimited number of alternatives to assert them.

Potentially, there could be myriads of sources (addresses) that could address a phrase to a potentially large number of addressees. Choosing one among such a large number of alternatives; whether as addressor or addressee would radically change the ground and shift the power struggle; for instance, it could be Paul rather than Peter who could alternatively address John rather than Jack, with the result that in each case, implications for space in which the game of power is played, would be different. "No more argument" addressed as a phrase by an angry man to his wife would undoubtedly put both him and his wife on the power stand different from the time when the

exact phrase is addressed to both by their child who would have no more by any.

Likewise, there could be byroads of referents on which the phrase could be focused, as it is also potentially possible to say myriads of things about a given referent once it is chosen with the result that each time a new shuffling of power positions will come out with quite different implications for each of the four elements that form the phrase universe. The referent could include all that one can imagine, from the sky through a factory to a worm, for instance. The sense of what is said about the referent could include as wide a range of opinions as "the sky is mine" to "the factory is not yours."

However, not everything is not possible to say, and factory worm is the sky. That will be considered nonsense because it violates the rules governing "phrase regimens" (Lyotard,1988, p.48) through a violation of "the rules of linkage" (ibid, p.29). A phrase in void makes little sense; the shape as Lyotard says, "presented by the tail of a cat" (ibid, p.140), a cry, a squeal, even a long sentence, in the void, signifies little if it is not linked to some other phrases. "[To] link is necessary" (ibid, p.29). A phrase is meaningful only when it occurs in a context a fundamental part of other phrases. Moreover, here, the whole argument boils down that *it is possible for any given phrase to occur in various contexts and be linked, although not with every other phrase, at least with many possible ones, signifying a somewhat different meaning in each case.* "How to link", according to Lyotard" is contingent" (ibid). In other words, there is a free will that can choose between, and most of the time, among many options. There are always numerous owners of such free will. The problem arises when one deploys all she has to make his/ her choice of the options and put them together in a chain or simply link them at the cost of others' right to choose. Making a choice and sealing it as the final or the only possible choice brings the free play of "contingent" linkage to a halt and derives all other owners of free will from the right to enforce their will and make their own choices. If says, "That plot of land is mine, and it comes to fruition best if it is planted with

potato's". He uses many phrases and cases of linkage, which exclude many others including the following. The referent is *not* a ranch or a playground or a pool since it is claimed to be a plot of farming land. That it is *not* asphalted or drown with water or paved since it can come to fruition. That tomato's or carrots or peppers are not the best vegetables to be planted there, and probably most important of all. That is employed in the example above. In brief, there is always a multiplicity of phrases to choose from and a multiplicity of other phrases to link to in various possible ways. Moreover, at the same time, some free will always try to bring the free play of choosing and linking to a halt since the particular choice a given free will makes, automatically excludes almost all others.

What happens after phrases are chosen and linked together according to the rules of phrase regimens? The cluster into what Lyotard (1988) calls "genets of discourse", which "fix the rules of linkage... determine the stakes... submit phrases from different regimens to a single finality" (Lyotard, 1988, p.29). Take biology, psychology, sociology and politics as instances of discourse genres and 'human being' as a referent that might occur in all sorts of phrases. The way biology makes phrases referring to 'human beings', the way it puts them together and the "single finality" or the end to which it submits them, will undoubtedly differ from those of psychology, sociology or any other discourse genre. A phrase like 'a human being is a mind with this or that number of bones in the legs,' natural as it might be to a genre like, biology, is hardly likely to occur in sociology or politics. Still less likely for it to be squealed by a phrase like 'and 28 teeth, the main part of which is calcium' the previous question should be asked a second time here: what happens after genres of discourse take shape Metanarratives show up. They are overarching frames that provide guidelines for genres of discourse, determining rules of the play for how they should play their part, how they can join the others, how they should position themselves within the totality of genres of discourse and, at a lower and more fundamental level, how and what phrases they should allow to go to their

making as a genre of discourse. As Angelique Du Toit has it: "Grand narratives or metanarratives, as they are also referred to, are defined as large-scale theories and philosophies of the world which, according to Lyotard, should be viewed with deep scepticism (Toit, 2011, p.86). Grand narratives establish iron rules for the formation of phrases. They decide what elements should go to the making of a phrase, what phrases are acceptable. What phrases should follow a given phrase, and how they should be linked together as they also exert the same pressure on discourse genres. "[t]he totalitarianism of the grand narrative... seeks to reduce everything to a single genre in order to stifle the differend in the process." (ibid, p.88).

Lyotard does not spend much time answering chicken-or-egg questions to determine which comes first: the phrase or the metanarrative. However, he does show the way out of "the totalitarianism of the grand narrative". The little narrative is the key. The answer to the following question will provide the missing link from Lyotard's philosophical stance: Why should a metanarrative guard the production and linkage of phrases and genres of discourse with so much zest and energy? Because a phrase produced 'Inappropriately' or linked to another 'inappropriately' can function as a loose brick; in the metanarrative structure, whose further linkage to other phrases can lead to a crack and finally. Bring about the collapse of the whole structure. A phrase can start a little narrative to fly in the face of a grand narrative. "The... little narrative serves as an alternative and a challenge to the knowledge produced in the totalizing account of the grand narrative." (Purvis, 2011, p.134). Thus, to defy the suppressing metanarrative, one has only to produce little narratives. To make a little narrative one should produce phrases outside the normal range of authorized ones and/or link the unruly phrases in creative ways not authorized by the metanarrative regime. Creativity is the key here, and the potential and unpredictable phrase or and uncontrollable linkage have to seriously challenge the complicated edifice of the grand narrative and the philosophical possibility of producing and

linking such phrases are essential to the whole game.

Literary Analysis: Linkage in *The Information*

Martin Amis is reputed as “the ‘bad boy’ of English letters, whose “work directly challenges the ‘genteel tradition’ that still dominates British fiction” (Diedrick, 1995, p.i). In Lyotardian terms ‘the bad boy’ can refer to a creative writer who does not follow the dominant tradition of phrasing or the authorized ways of linkage and ‘the genteel tradition that still dominates’ can stand for the rule of a metanarrative that control all as an overarching framework of activity, especially if we admit that despite the whole lot of arguments supporting Amis’s “relationship with his father”, he “has consistently opposed” the latter’s “political and aesthetic conservatism” (ibid). A conservative father can represent much more than that. He can stand for all those aspects of a grad, narrative in which a previous generation, even a chain of previous generations was deeply rooted. In other words, as Diedrick also has noted Amis’s relationship with metanarratives and the postmodern “involves far more than stylistic analysis, since his style is inseparable from, and embodies, his larger social outlook.” (Diedrick, 1995:11). In Lyotardian terms, the threat with which Martin Amis intimidated the dominant metanarratives is not only a matter of choice of words, phrases or sentences, but a deviation in meaning, from the norm, which is at the same time dependent upon the individual words and runs through, and rules, them.

What follows is a close examination of excerpts from Amis to show his choice of phrases along with his way of linking them start little narratives that display the potential to undermine metanarratives.

The Information, a 1995 novel by Amis, opens this way. “Cities at night, I feel, contain men who cry in their sleep and then say nothing” (p.3). The first link in the chain of phrases Amis links together could simply be anything from butterflies to aeroplanes, from shepherds to language and from terror to life itself. But Amis chases “cities”. Again, it could

be “cities under the light of the day”, “cities at a moment of crisis”, “cities as cradles of civilization”, “cities as main sources of air pollution”, or any other combinations that would be grammatically and logically acceptable; however, Amis’ choice is “cities at night”. One more, cities at night could be the missing piece in many different puzzles. To mention only a few: Cities at night; cradle the most profound calm and serenity; cities at night have witnessed terrible crimes; cities at night provide men with the best opportunity for thinking and planning, or cities at night are the best places for night life and recreation. All these and many more are possible, each with some implications for more complex chains of thought and ultimately for grand narratives. Amis’ choice is none of these, however. In a rather unexpected turn, he changes his focus from cities to “men who cry in their sleep and then say nothing”. Thus, a novel that seemed to tell a story about cities turns out to be a story about “men” who live in such cities, even though it would probably be impossible to deal with one without the other. The referent being “men”, the sense is obvious: They cry silently, spending turbulent, nightmarish nights. What about the addressor and the addressee in this ecosystem of discourse?

It is hardly possible for a stretch of language, be it a short greeting or a long novel, to serve only one of the Jakobsonian functions, at a time, say the “expressive function”. These functions, as Roman Jakobson asserted are often mixed and mingled (Jakobson, 2000, p.135). In other words, when the most extreme cases of expression where, for instance, the address or cries out of pain or tells of unknown joys might have some implications for a particular or general addressee. And a novelist always writes with the image of some particular or general reader or both at the back of his/ her mind. It is difficult, maybe even impossible, to determine with any precision whom exactly Amis addressed as a particular point of focus in his novels to impress, at the same time that the general audience or addressee also covers a blurry, ever-changing era that Amis, or any writer, performing at the same level as Amis, could never predict as it includes you and me as

well as thousands, even millions of others, totally unknown to the writer. A blurry and paradoxical answer like, ‘the general community of readers interested in literature’ might be the best answer, here.

Concerning the addressor, the same paradoxical state of clarity and confusion abides. An “I” appears in the very first line of the novel in the short intervention, “I feel” and disappears for long intervals not to emerge too regularly in the novel, leaving the reader in doubt whether it is Amis himself who is speaking directly to the reader, a persona whom he playfully exploits or a general community of speaker that might speak their thoughts through Amis, taking the same positions against a grand narrative, say Capitalism, or for any little narratives to which the novel gives expression. Of whatever size or shape this community might be, it certainly includes Amis himself since a writer can never stand apart from what he, she writes. However, it is a silent Amis, helplessly at the mercy of a reader that could be highly selective in his/ her reading of the novel, foregrounding some parts at the cost of the others automatically backgrounded. In brief, no matter how a writer links his/ her phrases, there is always room for the reader to re-link them and cast them in a different mould.

The Information is no exception. The opening lines and the conditions and image of “men who cry in their sleep” are linked to many things including the Labour party, Communism, Capitalism and even Feminism.

The whole novel pivots around peer rivalry between two writers, Richard Tull, a talented, sophisticated and complicated writer who for all his brilliance is not rewarded, being pitifully driven into a state of invisibility so that not only girls but also people of all walks, no matter how far or how close they are in their relations to him, simply “[look] through him”, as Amis puts it: “Before, [they] looked at him and showed interest or no interest. Then, for a while, they looked past him. Now they looked through him” (ibid, p.111), and a confident Gwyn Barry. He, for all his shallow personality, lack of deep insight and want of artistic talent, is amply rewarded by popularity among the members of a society that pays almost an obsessive attention

to him, by easy money that is generously spent on him, and by the resulted fame and respect that follows.

Gwyn Barry had his photograph taken. The financier - Sebby-had his photograph taken. Gwyn Barry was photographed with the financier. The publisher was photographed with Gwyn Barry and the captain of the industry. Finally, the captain of industry was photographed with the shadow Minister of the Arts and Gwyn Barry (ibid, p.17).

Put in the light of the total invisibility from which Richard Tull suffers, the process of photographing and being photographed gathers a sense of injustice, unfair treatment and an obvious manifestation of inequality. Being driven into an extreme feeling of envy that is a direct result of his being invisible, Richard is present on the same formal occasion. However, his presence is equal almost to absence. “Richard looked on with a frowsy sigh. Being photographed, as an activity, was in itself not worth envying. What was enviable, and unbelievable, was that Gwyn should be worth photographing.” (ibid, p.12)

Photography, “as an activity” is not enviable indeed. Nor is it signifying any particular meaning till it could be linked to something else, say, and a larger social, political or literary context. In Amis’ novel, Gwyn could be photographed as a criminal is with a certain number when he or she is taken to prison. Likewise, Gwyn could have been photographed with his young fiancé on the night of their official marriage at this or that church; however, Amis links photography to other aspects of social and literary life, his way. It is a particular linkage that enables him to profess on some questions, including sex and gender.

Amis wrote *The Information* with an eye on the question of sexual and consequently gender difference.

“The photographer was a woman, a girl, black-clad, Nordic; leggy-how she crouched and teetered for her image of Gwyn!” (ibid, p.12)

It is not unlikely that Amis chose the word “men” in “men who cry in their sleep”

consciously and intentionally not to signify human beings but the male sex. There is early proof in the novel to confirm the claim. The opening paragraph includes “men who cry in their sleep” consciously and intentionally not to signify human beings but the male sex. There is early proof in the novel to confirm the claim. In the opening paragraph which includes “men who cry in their sleep”, Amis also chose to include: “Women-and they can be wives, lovers, gaunt muses, fat nurses, obsessions, devourers, exes, nemeses-will wake and turn to these men and ask, with female need-to-know, what is it?” (p.3)

What does that way of linkage suggest? Does it suggest that women are not subject to such nightly cries because of inequality and injustice? Does it suggest that women are indeed subject to them but do not feel them? Have no proper understanding of them or of their conditions? Does it suggest that women play a part, maybe even an essential part in constructing the inequality and injustice that corners men like Richard Tull?

Amis linkage method makes all these plausible especially the last one. On an occasion when Gwyn is admired for beyond what he really deserves, and Tull is unfairly cornered to nothingness, a female columnist is a pivotal contributor. On that occasion, the sexual difference arises and is linked with homosexuality or heterosexuality in one’s literary taste. The publisher says: “woman and men read Women’s magazines...” (ibid, p.18) to which Richard reacts by posing a question: “Has anyone ever really established whether men prefer to read men? Whether women prefer to read women?” (ibid) and that ignites an angry argument. ‘Oh please. What is this?’ Said the female columnist. ‘We are not talking about motorbikes or knitting patterns. We are talking about *literature* for God’s sake.’ (ibid) The argument goes on, and Richard says:

Is this without interest? Nabokov said he was frankly homosexual in his literary tastes. I do not think men and women write and read in the same way. They go at it differently. (ibid)

The female columnist replies: “And I suppose... that there are *radical* differences too?... I cannot believe I hear this. I thought we came here today to talk about *art*. What is the matter with you? Are you drunk? (ibid) The argument still goes on and Gwyn’s opinion is asked. A mesmerizing silence falls on all. “Everyone turned to him in silence... Gwyn said slowly, ‘I find I never think in terms of men. In terms of women I find I always think in terms of ... *people*.’” (ibid, p.19) The company’s “immediate approbation” follows and all these drive Richard into a fiery speech.

A very *low-level* remark, if I may say so. Hey, Gwyn. You know what you remind me of. A quiz in a color magazine—you know, Are You Cut Out To Be a *Teacher*? Final question: Would you rather teach (a) history, or (b) geography, or (c) . . . *children*. Well, you don't get a choice about teaching children. But there is a choice, and a difference, between history and geography. It must make you feel nice and young to say that being a man means nothing and being a woman means nothing and what matters is being a ... *person*. How about being a *spider*, Gwyn. Let's imagine you're a *spider*. You're a spider, and you've just had your first serious date. You're limping away from that now, and you're looking over your shoulder, and there's your girlfriend, eating one of your legs like it was a chicken drumstick. What would you say? I know. You'd say: I find I never think in terms of male spiders or in terms of female spiders. I find I always think in terms of... *spiders*. (ibid)

What Richard receives as a response is a “unanimity of downward revision” doubled “with all that this had cost him” (ibid). The response makes Richard still a worse-downtrodden member of the company because of the female members’ wholehearted support for Gwyn. Add to this Gina’s total disregard and disrespect for Richard at home to find out how vital the role of women is in establishing the unfair inequality between a cheap writer that is rewarded and a severe writer that is neglected past visibility. Gina is Richard's wife, who

represents the external, inclusive system inside Richard's home by disempowering him. Several little narratives including the unanimous female support for Gwyn, which is automatically translated into the degradation of Richard, Gwyn's being photographed continuously and Richard's being neglected go hand in hand in *The Information* to clash with such grand narratives as feminism and a mirage of equality and justice.

No one photographed [Richard] anymore, not even Gina. When the photographs came back from the chemist's, after increasingly infrequent Tull holiday, Richard was never there; Marius, Marco, Gina, some peasant or lifeguard or donkey-and Richard's elbow or earlobe on the edge of the frame, on the edge of life and love.... (Amis, 1995, p. 12)

In brief, the little narrative that some men cry in their sleep during the night is linked to the question of women to imply what might not exactly go along with such a grand narrative as Feminism. The idea boils down to that Feminism as a grand narrative holds that men are oppressors and women, oppressed. In contrast, Amis' little narratives suggest that women, not only participate in establishing the general inequality to which they eventually fall victims, but also that their contribution *Information*, by Richard Tull.

Amis' little narratives and how they are linked together target the Labour Party and Communism. Interviews double the effect of photography in widening and deepening the inequality and injustice gap, and interviews go on, and Gwyn is interviewed time after time. This time, the interviewer said, "Many people think that, because you are the figure you now are that the next step is politics. What do you... Do you...?"

"Politics", said Gwyn. "Gosh. Well I cannot say I've given it that much thought. Thus, for let's say I would not wait to rule it out. As yet." "you sound like a politician already, Gwyn." This was Richard. (ibid)

A bit later, Gwyn professes on politics and writing.

"I think writing will do me," said Gwyn.

"They are not incompatible, though, are

they? Novelist and politician are both concerned with human potential." "This would be Labour of course." "Obviously." "Of course." "Of course." (ibid)

The idea of writing and politics doing the same, fulfilling the same responsibility and having the same concerns is linked here to the Labour Party; however, Gwyn's being Labour is a little narrative that debases all the moonshines of the Labour Party and its claims to justice, equality and the improvement of the living conditions of the poor and the working class. There is little need for comprehensive, scholarly research here. Consulting any decent dictionary reveals that the Labour Party refers to "a political party in Britain and some other countries that aims to improve social conditions for ordinary working people and poorer people." (Summers, et al., 2006, p.848). Amis' little narrative gives an image of the Labour Party that is hardly in line with the one they have given out of themselves.

Of course, thought Richard. Yeah: of course, Gwyn was Labour. It was obvious. Obvious not only from the ripply cornice twenty feet above their heads, not from the brass lamps or the military plumpness of the leather-topped desk. Obvious because Gwyn was what he was a writer, in England, at the end of the twentieth century. There was nothing else for such a person to be. Richard was Labour, equally obviously. (Amis, 1995, p. 12)

Being a Labour linked to "ripply cornices twenty feet above their heads", "brass lamps" and "the military plumpness of the leather-topped desk" tells a different story from the one that is 'normally' expected. Living a life of luxury, as Gwyn does, is hardly congruous with a deep concern for the working and more impoverished people. Being a Labour is reduced here to a gesture, an empty gesture that is hardly more than a little. Being a Labour with all its overtones here is also linked to socialism and Communism.

Rich and Labour: that was okay. Having always been poor was a good preparation for being rich. Better than having always

been rich. Let the *socialist* drink. Champagne. At least he was new to it. Anyway, who cared? Richard had even been a member of the *Communist* Party, in his early twenties-for all the fucking good that did him. (ibid, p.13, *Emphasis added*)

Through their affinity with the Labour Party and the similarity in aims and objectives, Socialism and Communism also are linked with empty gestures of mode and fashion, devoid of the promised content, efficacy and functions they were once believed to have.

So is America, Great America of hopes, promises, opportunities and dreams. Richard “had never been to America” (ibid, p.95). Like all others he was more than ready to associate all that was good with America; and automatically recall that land of dreams and promises whenever and wherever he came to any malfunctions, shortcomings, and problems. He would say with others, “Come on, this is not America” (ibid, p.18) to signify that, ‘here’, things are naturally like that and that is the general state of everything and the general condition of life. Take care! It is America where such inconvenience is unexpected and out of context, not ‘here’.

However, when he first steps into that land of promises and opportunities, his mind opens up to realities unheard of before. What he faces is violence, vulgarity, disposition of wealth, terrible politicians, awful schooling and even low standards of book reviewing.

He spent his first two hours in New York wearing an expression of riveted horror that was not a response to American violence or vulgarity to the disposition of American wealth, the quality of American politicians, the condition of American schooling or the standard of American book reviewing. (ibid, p.217)

Richard slightly changes his view of some of these later on, indeed, for instance, he later found the standard of book reviewing in America “hopelessly variable but often chastening high” (ibid). However, such changes mean minor in the face of all those horrible and sometimes diabolically-comic aspects of what makes America and its dreams. As early as the

time he is on the aeroplane that takes him to America, he comes across some bizarre experience of a world alien to the image given of it. For all the propaganda of equality and justice, America, he finds out, is in a cold-blooded manner divided into the rich and the poor, the gap being eternally guaranteed through theoretical constructions that include aspects of codes of proper conduct.

In the aisle he saw that a stewardess was coming toward him, looking to left and right and dutifully saying,

“A Mr. Tull? A Mr. Tull. A Mr. Tull at all? ”...

“A Mr. Tull? A Mr. Tull at all.”

This too was the language of the air, this was air speak; no *terra firma* would ever talk like that. (ibid, p.213)

This is language expanded and inwardly emptied by formalities and decorum. Instead, it is empty formality and decorum embodied, this time, in language. To Richard, this is disheartening, but what disillusion him about America still more, is the shameless division between the rich and the poor within the same aeroplane, especially now that he, a talented writer and a meticulous critic of great taste and in disputed knowledge and skill should position himself among the poor. In contrast a cheap writer of shallow scribbles should sit among the very rich. The complicated system of formalities that enhances the difference and guards the discrimination adds fuel to the fire.

The stewardess escorted him down the length of Economy, and then another stewardess escorted him through Business World; he ducked under a curtain, and then another stewardess led him into First. As he made his journey, this journey within a journey, getting nearer to America, Richard looked to see what everyone was reading, and found that his progress through the plane described a diagonal of shocking decline. (ibid, p.213-4)

Concerning the novelty of the present study, it should be noted that few, if any, studies have explored the question of Lyotardian linkage in

Martin Amis' works and this will most probably be the first of its kind. Therefore, it will be a path-breaking study in its own right. Researchers have usually concerned themselves with other aspects of Amis' novels or the implication of Lyotard's philosophy for literature. A few examples might give a preview of the direction and scope of studies done so far and thus put the reader in a better position to appreciate the novelty of the present research.

This novel is the unique subject of this research. An article entitled "Martin Amis's Money and the Crisis of Fordism" (2019) by Roberto del Valle Alcala tries to clarify how the novel was affected by and reflects "the Crisis of Fordism in the 1970s and 1980s" (Alcala, 2019, p.1). The present study departs from Alcala's article in that the latter has nothing to do with Lyotard or a Lyotardian approach in addition to the fact that linkage has no place whatsoever in it at the same time that no mention is made of *The Information*.

Like Alcala, Neil Vickers turns to Amis. He makes a noteworthy attempt to offer a new understanding but again his approach is as remote from that of the present study as Alcala's because Vickers adopts a phenomenological and psychoanalytic viewpoint to shed some light on Amis in his article, "The body in Martin Amis's Experience" (2016). The main focus of Vickers' attempt is "the contribution that the body makes to selfhood in the autobiography" (Vickers, 2016, p.1). Although Amis the writer might function as a bridge to relate the present study to Vickers', two diverging roads never meet a second time since in this research phenomenology, psychoanalysis, biography, and the body's importance to a sense of selfhood are of little significance. Here, a given phenomenon is important only so far. It can be viewed as a link in the brief chain of a little narrative that finally challenges a grand narrative's whole fabric. Few focal points could be as remotely different.

Likewise, Akbari, et al. study "Narrative Structure in Martin Amis's *London Fields*" in an article of the same name (2013). Amis' art of characterization is what Akbari and his colleagues concentrate on. Their theoretical

framework is Gerard Genette's narratological analyses guidelines. They try to find out how Amis shapes his characters and makes them stand out against each other, especially when creating protagonists. Given the main focus of the present study and its emphasis on the choice of phrases, linkage, formation of little narratives, and the hazard even in a single phrase that threatens a metanarrative, one hardly feels the need to discuss the points departure in detail.

Being distinguished in many ways from other works on Amis and illustrating in clear, concrete examples how a single, seemingly indifferent phrase can prove to be a significant threat to a prestigious, grand narrative, this article hopes to contribute to what we know so far about Amis, phrases, linkage, metanarratives and the way a power structure reacts to the choice of some seemingly ineffective phrases.

CONCLUSION

Thus, Amis creates the links of a discourse, not a systematized overarching discourse. However, a piecemeal looks like a multiplicity of threads heaped up untidily to go against a multiplicity of grand narratives. He makes phrases and then links them together in ways not authorized by any grand narratives such as Marxism, Capitalism, Feminism or the American dream. Cities are linked to nights, and men and then to crying. These are further linked to photography, photographing and being photographed, to interviewing and being interviewed to make another little narrative: that of peer rivalry between two writers, Richard and Gwyn, the first, a first-rank, talented writer with a deep insight who, for all his potential, is punished with negligence to the point of invisibility, while the second, for all his shallow scribbling is raised to the level of a little god whose remarks are in disputability taken as revealed truth. He lives a highly luxurious life, while Richard Tull struggles for his daily bread. These are linked to a journey to America and further linked to the way that the flight attendants speak and escort Richard and also the way the same place is divided into unequal sections between the rich and the poor to make

little narratives that clash in a differend with lots of grand narratives, including Capitalism and the American dream.

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