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硕士学位论文

后现代主义视角下的《伦敦场地》解读

学科专业：英语语言文学

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A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Master

**AN INTERPRETATION OF *LONDON*
FIELDS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
POSTMODERNISM**

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摘要

马丁·艾米斯是当代英国文坛举足轻重的小说家。同时马丁·艾米斯也是公认的语言天才和重要的后现代实验派作家。《伦敦场地》出版于1989年，被认为是马丁·艾米斯最强有力的小说作品。这部小说作为一部黑色喜剧讲述了一个谋杀之谜。小说的基调从带有深刻个人反思的高雅喜剧逐渐转变为最后期限将至时不祥的预感和恐慌。

由于马丁·艾米斯对内容的偏好，艾米斯的评论者们往往更看重他作品的形式和主题。对他最长的小说——《伦敦场地》的研究也集中在其的结构框架和其微妙和主题上。然而，《伦敦场地》同时也是一部具有很多后现代写作特征的后现代主义小说代表作。

后现代主义理论指出，后现代小说具有复杂性和开放性。即不相一致的原因和解释都存在于同一个文本之中，从而使“读者面临意义过于丰富的困境”。意义的不确定性在于有小说提供的多种可能的、不一致的解释，同时也在于缺少说明一种选择优于其他选择的证据。读者不能合乎逻辑地拥有所有的解释，然而他又不能提供证据在多种选择中确定一个。

本文共分六个部分。

第一部分简要介绍作家马丁·艾米斯人生经历和写作生涯，以及小说《伦敦场地》的主要情节内容。

第二部分简要介绍后现代主义的定义及基本理论，发展过程和主要特征。本章也是本论文的主要理论支撑。

第三部分主要分析后现代主义理论的不确定性在《伦敦场地》中的体现。这一章主要从主题的不确定性和情感的不确定性两方面进行讨论。

第四部分主要分析后现代主义理论的悲剧性在《伦敦场地》中的体现。这一部分主要从道德的悲剧和人物形象的悲剧两个方面进行论述。

第五部分主要分析后现代主义理论的游戏性在《伦敦场地》中的体现。这一章从时间的游戏性和死亡的游戏性两个角度进行分析。

第六部分是结语。

关键词：后现代主义；《伦敦场地》；不确定性；悲剧性；游戏性

Abstract

Martin Amis is an eminent figure in the contemporary British literature. He is recognized as a word virtuoso and major postmodern experimentalist. *London Fields*, regarded as possibly Amis's strongest novel, is a murder mystery novel, black comic. The novel was published in 1989. The tone of the novel gradually shifts from high comedy, which is interspersed with deep personal introspections, to a dark sense of foreboding and eventually panic at the approach of the deadline, or "horror day", the climactic scene alluded to on the very first page.

Due to Amis's preference over content, Amis's critics often pay more attention to the forms and the themes in his works. Such as *London Fields*, Amis's longest novel, has been examined at length in terms of its exquisite structure, and its subtle themes. However, *London Fields*, as a representative of postmodern novels with a lot of postmodern characteristics, conforms to a lot of the postmodern tendencies.

Based on the theory of postmodernism, in the postmodernism novels there are always the features of openness and complexity. That means, all the reasons of contradictory and explanations co-exist in one text, so that to put the readers in the situation which is full of different meanings. The indeterminacy lies in the fact that the postmodern novels provide the readers so many possible and paradoxical explanations. What's more, there are no sufficient reasons that can prove one explanation is better than other ones. The readers will neither logically own all the explanations nor choose a so-called better explanation.

The paper includes six parts.

The first part introduces the life and writing experiences of Martin Amis as well as the plot of *London Fields*.

The second part gives a short introduction to the basic theory of postmodernism, the developing process of postmodern novels and its main features.

The third part mainly analyzes the indeterminacy in *London Fields*, from the perspective of theme and emotion.

The fourth part mainly analyzes the tragedy in *London Fields*. This chapter includes two parts: the tragedy of moral and the tragedy of characters.

The fifth part mainly analyzes the gameplay in *London Fields*. The present author analyzes from two aspects: game of time and game of death.

The last part is the conclusion.

Key words: Postmodernism, *London Fields*, Indeterminacy, Tragedy, Gameplay

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 Introduction to Martin Amis

Martin Amis is a British novelist, literary critic and short story writer. He was born in South Wales on August 25th 1949. His father is Sir Kingsley Amis, who was a famous English novelist, poet, and critic. Amis got his education in America, Spain and Britain. Amis graduated from Exeter College, Oxford, with a "Congratulatory First" in English in 1971. After graduation, he found an entry-level job at *The Times Literary Supplement*. At the age of 27 he was named literary editor of the *New Statesman* and worked till 1979.

When Amis was a teenager, he used to read comic books. It was his stepmother, Elizabeth Jane Howard who was also a novelist, lead him to serious reading. She introduced Jane Austen to him. Jane Austen is named as Amis's earliest influence in literature. A few years later, His first novel *The Rachel Papers*, published in 1973, won the Somerset Maugham Award. It was the most traditional one of his novels and was made into an unsuccessful cult film. Two years later, Amis published *Dead Babies*, which is a disturbingly dark tale. In 1977, he published *Success*. Then in 1980, Amis quit from the press and became a full-time writer. Between 1981 and 1994, Amis published four more novels, four volumes of non-fiction, and a collection of short stories on the theme of nuclear terror. In 1984, *Money* was published to resounding acclaim. Later in 1989, *London Fields* was published. *Money* and *London Fields* are his best-known novels. They are considered as typically Martian fictions: dark comedies which portray the estrangement and hostility between people, and the universal moral atrophy. These two works were written in Amis's prime period, both of which concentrated Amis's thematic concerns, and showed his maturity in writing style as an eminent novelist. Also the two novels exhibit characteristics of postmodernism, especially in *London Fields*. Then he successfully published *Time's Arrow* (1991), *The Information* (1995) and *Night Train* (1997).

The 2000s were Amis's least productive decade in terms of full-length fiction since starting in the 1970s, while his non-fiction work saw a dramatic uptick in volume. In 2000, Amis published a memoir called *Experience*. As an autobiography, it largely concerned with the strange relationship between him and his father, Kingsley Amis. This book deals with many facets of Amis's life and was awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for biography. In 2003, Amis published his new novel *Yellow Dog*, which received mixed reviews, with some critics proclaiming the novel a return to form,

but most considered the book to be a great disappointment. In September 2006, Amis published his eleventh novel, *House of Meetings*. It is a short work which continued the author's crusade against the crimes of Stalinism and also saw some consideration of the state of contemporary post-Soviet Russia. After that in 2010, after a long period of writing, rewriting, editing and revision, Amis published his long-awaited new long novel, *The Pregnant Widow*, which is concerned with the sexual revolution.

Since early 1970s, Amis has published 13 novels all together. Among these works, his memoir *Experience* has received the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and he has been listed for the Booker Prize twice to date (shortlisted in 1991 for *Time's Arrow* and longlisted in 2003 for *Yellow Dog*). Amis served as the Professor of Creative Writing at the Centre for New Writing at the University of Manchester until 2011. *The Times* named him in 2008 as one of the 50 greatest British writers since 1945. Amis's work centers around the apparent excesses of late-capitalist Western society, whose perceived absurdity he often satirizes through grotesque caricature; he has been portrayed as a master of what the *New York Times* called "the new unpleasantness". Inspired by Saul Bellow, Vladimir Nabokov, and James Joyce, as well as by his father Kingsley Amis, Amis himself went on to heavily influence many successful British novelists of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, including Will Self and Zadie Smith.

All in all, Martin Amis has inspired public frenzy that few authors can rival in the modern era. He ranked among the "Best Twenty Young British Novelists" identified by the Book Marketing Council in 1983 and in 2008 he was again named as one of the fifty greatest British writers since 1945 by *The Times*. He is considered as one of the most innovative and influential voices in contemporary British fiction. His works have prompted critics' new considerations of realism and postmodernism.

1.2 Introduction to *London Fields*

London Fields was published in 1989. So far, as Amis's longest work, the novel has gained a sales volume of over 300,000 copies. The book was overlooked for the Booker Prize shortlist but it still receives great attention for the hybrid conflation of genres. *New York Times* once commented that *London Fields* is "a comic murder mystery, an apocalyptic satire, a scatological meditation on love and death and nuclear winter."¹ James Diedrick, an authoritative critic of Martin Amis, remarks that *London Fields* is "an unstable mixture of millennial murder mystery, urban satire, apocalyptic jeremiad and domestic farce."¹

London Fields is a black comic, murder mystery novel. The story is narrated by Samson Young, an American writer living in London who has had writer's block for 20 years and is now terminally ill. The other main characters are Guy Clinch, the foil; Keith Talent, the cheat; and Nicola Six, the murderess, who knows she will be murdered and who goes in search of her killer. Before the discussion of the novel, the

title—London Fields should be noted first. London Fields is a park in Hackney, east London, but the novel is set in west London, like most of Amis's work. The park in which the narrator, Samson Young, walks with various characters – Nicola Six, Guy Clinch and Keith Talent – is Hyde Park in central London. Samson reminisces that he played in "London Fields" as a boy, and wants to return there before his death. It is not clear whether the "London Fields" he refers to is the real-life East London park, or whether it has another meaning. The title suggests a paradox: a rural or pastoral place within a modern urban setting. Sam's narrative refers again to this inherent paradox, as he remarks that in London "there are no fields", only fields of attraction and repulsion, only force fields.

The novel is set in 1999 in the futuristic. However, the story happens in a city familiar to London when it was in its grimmest time before the new millennia. It is based closely on the eighties' moral landscape (urban desperation) that Amis is familiar with. It is a story of being murdered and murdering. It is narrated by Samson Young, an American writer who is dying of terminal disease. He comes to London to witness and write down the murder of Nicola Six, the heroine of the story. She is a femme fatale who is disappointed about life and she believes that she will be murdered on her 35th birthday. Also the story is a love story. Nicola has two boyfriends: Keith Talent and Guy Clinch. Keith Talent is a lower-class petty criminal who lives upon darts, cheating, pornography and TV. Guy Clinch is an honorable gentleman who is rich in material wealth but poverty-stricken in spirit. The reason why Nicola keeps a relationship with Guy is mainly because he can provide her a lot of money. The book starts with "The Murderer" as the first chapter, but the readers still have no idea about who the murderer is until they reach the ending of the story. It ends with a mystery and leaves an open ending to the readers.

Amis's special narrative path impresses the readers most. The readers have to piece the text together by themselves. With this method, Amis makes great fun of the literary conventions and plays with the narrator, the characters and the readers.

This novel is one of Amis's most famous works. It describes the encounters between three main characters in London, as a climate disaster approaches. The characters have typically Amisian names and broad caricatured qualities: Nicola Six, a femme fatale who is determined to be murdered; Keith Talent, a lower-class crook with a passion for darts; and upper-middle-class Guy Clinch, "the fool, the foil, the poor foal" who is destined to come between the other two.

As a typical postmodern novel, the book was overlooked for the Booker Prize shortlist in the year of publication because of panel members protesting against its alleged misogyny, however, it has received constant attention for its hybrid conflation of genres and it is keeping eliciting conflicting responses as a brilliant tour de force of a British literary celebrity.

1.3 Literature Review

Since Martin Amis is one of the greatest British writers since 1945, there are more and more people who begin to study Amis and his works. However, studies abroad are much richer abroad than in China. Up to now, there are seven monographs published: *Martin Amis* (1999) by John Baxter, *Martians, Monsters, and Madonna: Fiction and Form in the World of Martin Amis* (2000) by John A. Dern, *The Fiction of Martin Amis: A Reader's Guide to Essential Criticism* (2000) by Nicolas Tredell, *Martin Amis: The Rachel Papers, London Fields, Time's Arrow Experience* (2003) by Margaret Reynolds, *Understanding Martin Amis* (2004) by James Diedrick, *Martin Amis: Postmodernism and Beyond* (2006) edited by Gavin Keulks and *Martin Amis*(2008) by Brian Finney. Besides, there is a monograph dedicated to a comparative study of Martin Amis and Kingsley Amis. The book, entitled *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis and the British Novel since 1950*, was again written by Gavin Keulks in 2003. among the eight books listed above, only four books are available in China. And they are *Martin Amis*, *Understanding Martin Amis*, *Martin Amis: Postmodernism and Beyond*, and *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis and the British Novel since 1950*.

In addition, from the Google Scholar Web, the present author has found more than fifty theses, essays and reviews related to Martin Amis. Among them there are seven articles and reviews written by Amis. And from CNKI web, there are about 20 theses on Amis and his several works. After reading all of these theses carefully, the present author finds that the studies all focus on some of his novels, such as *London Fields*, *Money*, *Night Train*, *Time's Arrow*, *Yellow Dog* and so on.

At home, the study on Martin Amis and his works did not receive enough attention, and the theses and essays are not so many. There are more than 20 theses about Martin Amis on CNKI web, among which there are 7 on *London Fields*. Overall, the studies focus on the following aspects: narratology, black humor and irony, as well as the themes and emotions.

In terms of narratology, people pay more attention on narrative grammar and narrative time. Wu Xiang published 《马丁·艾米斯的“新概念”小说——关于小说〈伦敦场地〉的叙事语法分析》 in 2008, and revealed that the novel is totally a game of grammar. In 2013, Yu Miao, Sun Yachao and Xiao Chengxiao published 《〈伦敦场地〉的叙事时间艺术》, and analyzed the unique strategy in narrative time. On black humor and irony, Yu Miao and Chen Yikan respectively write their thesis on each aspect. Yu Miao's 《解读〈伦敦场地〉中的黑色幽默》 showed that it is black humor that makes the novel successful and in this way, the novel sounds the alarm to human beings. Chen Yikan from Fudan University write his academic dissertation *Irony in Martin Amis's London Fields and Money* in 2012. The thesis studies the use of irony in the novel and tells us that the author is helping the readers to set up right value judgment. The third group is about theme and emotion of the novel. Yang Lirong's *Bleak Millennium: Athematic Study of Martin Amis's London Fields* analyzes the theme of *London Fields*

from the perspective of sociology, Freudianism and Baudrillardian mass media theory.

Thus it can be seen that few of the studies on Martin Amis and *London Fields* are about postmodernism. So the present author thinks it is important and significant to interpret *London Fields* from the perspective of postmodernism.

Chapter Two Introduction of Postmodernism

2.1 Definition of Postmodernism

Scholars have no agreed answer for the exact definition of postmodernism. So in order to understand what postmodernism is, we had better start with the relationship between postmodernism and modernism.

In terms of time, many scholars hold the idea that although postmodern discourse came into being later than modern discourse, yet there is no clear and concrete historical division between them. At the same time, some other scholars believe that there should be a clear breakage and different developing stages. And in terms of words, some scholars believe that postmodernism is anti-modernism or literary trend that goes against modernism, whereas other scholars think postmodernism is the development of modernism, and even a dispensable part of modernism. However, it is worth mentioning that whether modernism or postmodernism, it is difficult to locate them into concrete historical objects. Instead, we should not consider postmodernism as some facts. It is actually an idea, a concept or a way of thinking. It is what people summarize or express of those new phenomenon or new experience. It is a cultural trend that emerges in the post-industrial society or information society. We can view the relationship between modernism and postmodernism as the development with kind of negation. Postmodernism could not come into being without the influence of modernism. Actually, it emerges because of the limitations of modernism, so to some extent, it takes the essence of modernism while discarding its dregs.

Postmodern society and postmodernism look quite different concepts, which are inter-related. Postmodern society means a kind of social formation, but postmodernism refers to the cultural trend which appears in the postmodern society. Since the middle of twentieth century, western countries have developed from industrial society into post-industrial society. The main task of the industrial society is to produce products, and everything moves around products. However, since the 1970s, with the development and utilization of computers and internet, the quickly rising popularity of the satellites, television and the promotion of commercialization and globalization, the production, the circulation, the service and the civil ideology experienced a significant change. As a result, people are confronted with new social contradiction and pressure, and the service-oriented production and the interpersonal relationship management becomes the central tasks of the society. Industrial society belongs to modern society, and entering the post-industrial society means entering the postmodern society. When

people in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are faced with all of these changes and multi-information brought by the globalization as well as the already existing alienation from the modern society, people begin to doubt and distrust the traditional ways of thinking including attitudes to technology and so-called reason. Therefore, postmodern cultural ideological trend which is full of resistance and rebellion appears. To some extent, postmodern cultural ideological trend is the production of postmodern society, and in turn the postmodern society promotes the development of the postmodern cultural ideological trend.

As a kind of social cultural ideological trend, postmodernism refers to philosophy, sociology, psychology, literature, art and nearly all other ideological areas. As for the postmodernism in the literature and art, the famous American critic Fredric Jameson once analyzed that capitalism developed from state capitalism to monopolistic capitalism, and then to late capitalism. He then located these three different social formations to three literary formations: in the first period (state capitalism), realism appeared; in the second period (monopolistic capitalism), modernism appeared; in the third period (late capitalism), postmodernism appeared.

From modernism to postmodernism, no matter in terms of time or theory or practice, we cannot draw a line that clearly divides the two terms. When did modern literature fall away from history? And when does postmodern literature come into the historical stage? Is the postmodernism a succession and development of the modernism or rebut and rebellion of the modernism? Is the postmodernism a way of thinking or a artistic style? As for all these questions, scholars' views vary greatly. The word postmodernism, generally speaking, first occurred in *Spain and Spanish America Poetry Selection* compiled by a Spanish man Federico de Onis in 1934. Later, Fitts made use of this term the second time in *Contemporary Latin American Poetry* in 1942. In 1957, famous British historian Arnold Joseph Toynbee readopted this term in *A Study of History*. However, from Toynbee's view, postmodernism signifies a new historical cycle that appeared after 1875. ^[1]

In general, modernism can be divided into three periods: pre-modernism, modernism and post-modernism. Pre-modernism refers to romanticism, realism, naturalism and other literature schools. They all agreed in concepts that there must be a highest thing behind all complex and complicated things that happens in the world, and it is just the highest thing that decides why things are those concrete things, why they possess those natures, and what kind of ways that they exist, develop and perish. However, they have different understandings towards this highest thing and some even completely oppose each other. For example, romanticism believes that the highest thing is humans' dream and emotion; realism believes that it is the economic relations between people; naturalism believes that it is humans' biological instinct. Despite that, they all believe that behind phenomena is the nature, believe that behind ontology is objectivity, believe that behind contingency is necessity, and believe that behind form is content.

The main feature of modernism is to destroy the depth mode of pre-modernism,

thus rejecting God and objectivity. But on the other hand, they crazily set up another depth mode, which is Sigmund Freud's unconsciousness, or existentialism's Dasein (being-there), or structuralism's deep structure. To this extent, although modernism still has a center, it has already been broken; although there is authority, it cannot be touched or seen; although there is hierarchy, it is just directly opposite to the original hierarchy. Therefore, modernism cannot help turning metaphor, illusion, anomaly, instinct, time confusion and other techniques to grasp and describe the real world.

In contrast, the main feature of postmodernism is to dispel the depth mode or center, and prohibit reconstructing after dispelling. Postmodernism denies that there is a highest thing behind all concrete things that happen in the world. Postmodern critics believe that there is no such nature behind phenomena, no objectivity behind ontology, no necessity behind contingency, no unconsciousness behind consciousness, no langue behind parole. The nature of things is not fixed, but open. Besides, the nature is not decided by the highest thing, but rather by the relationship between things. As a result, there is no so-called center, and everything is the edge.

The emergence of postmodern literature is closely related to the development and flourish of structuralism and especially post-structuralism or deconstruction. Post-structuralism has exposed the traditional metaphysical bias and self-contradiction in the western society. It destroys the standards of traditional literature, ascribing meaning and value to language and relationship. Postmodernism believes that the text is not the fixed location for both writers and readers but where the literal meaning lies in. According to Jacques Derrida, the meaning is not fixed, and all meanings change in the Différance. As for feminism, new historicism, western Marxism and other culture currents which are affected by post-structuralism, they all draw to a close of the structure, and destroy the authority, which exerts a significant influence to every aspect of the literature.

2.2 The Development of Postmodernism Novels

Postmodernism fictions can only make sense when compared with modernist fictions. That is to say, if we do not render what modernist fictions are, we will find it impossible to understand postmodernist fictions. Of course, the relationship between them is not so clear and there exists three typical opinions. According to the first opinion, the postmodernist fiction is surpass, abandon and negation of the modernist fiction. It is a fact of a new type of fictions replacing the old one. Besides, the basic transiting features that between them is breakup, destroy and subversion. When it comes to another opinion, they have a large number of things in common, but are substantially distinct. So it is unreasonable and not wise to regard them as completely the same or completely contrary. That "I am in you and you are in me" may be just the perfect sentence that describes their relationship. However, as for the third popular view, the term of postmodernist fiction is rather vague and general, and thus it cannot summarize

the common features and common tendency of the majority of current fictions.² Therefore, the so-called postmodernist fictions are no more than a kind of development of modernist fictions. However, along with postmodernism exerting an increasingly significant influence on the whole world, people begin to discuss more often than not the postmodernist fiction. To this extent, although the above-mentioned differences do exist, yet they do not stop people from understanding the postmodernist fiction from their own point of view.

Generally, postmodern literature refers to a major literature school, a trend of thought in literature and art and literary phenomena that came into being after the two world wars. It is the product of the western society when entering the post-industrial era. It came into being in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, and entered its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s. When it comes to the 1990s, it faded away gradually until turned to be dreary. Until now, postmodernism is an open, developing literature school, and there are still a great number of writers working on it. The term of postmodernist fiction is not a connotation-certain concept, and it includes many different schools of novel such as the Beat Generation, the Nouveau Roman, Black Humor, Meta-fiction, and Magic Realism and so on.

The Beat Generation is an American literature school that became popular after the Second World War. As Amiri Baraka once pointed out, “the so-called Beat Generation was a whole bunch of people, of all different nationalities, who came to the conclusion that society sucked.” The Beat Generation, also known as the beat movement, was a group of post-WWII American writers, as well as the cultural phenomena after the 1950s. Among its most influential members were Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. They are all straightforward, bold and unconstrained men and women, who live a simple life, tend to be coarse obnoxious persons, prefer bizarre dresses, detest work and study, and reject any social obligation. They are fond of wandering and roaming freely all over the world and despise social order and law and mechanical civilization. They are enthusiastic at new stimuli, absolute freedom, sensuality, drug taking and degradation, by which they challenge the decent traditional judgment and value. Therefore, they are called the beat generation.

The Nouveau Roman is a type of French novel in the 1950s that diverged from classical literary genres. It is Émile Henriot who coined the term in an article in the French newspaper *Le Monde* on May 22, 1957 to describe such writers as experimented with style in each novel, creating an essentially new style each time. It is seen by some critics and scholars that the nouveau roman emerged between modernism and postmodernism. The Nouveau Roman (the new novel) is characterized by an austere narrative tone, which is often used for precise physical descriptions. Besides, they exploit a heightened sense of ambiguity with radical disjunctions of time and space, and self-reflexive commentary on the processes of literary composition. In *Pour Un Nouveau Roman* (1963), Robbe Grillet pointed out that the traditional novel depends too much on its omniscient narrator, adheres to the unities of time and place, and thus creates an illusion of order and significance. However, it is inconsistent with the

radically discontinuous nature of modern experience. To this extent, the task of the Nouveau Roman (the new novel), as Robbe Grillet presents it, is to foster changes by using any technique that focuses on a particular interpretation on events, or that organizes events in such a way as to endow them with a determinate meaning.

Black Humor: Black humor is a quite significant literature school in western modern literature world, which exerts wide and profound influences on the modern literature. In all kinds of humor, black humor is one of the most effective forms of comedy. Black humor often deals with events such as war, murder, insanity and death, but it requires some thinking on the part of the audience and many people are not willing to do that.

Black humor is frequently used as an effective means of satire usually towards a tragic event. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, John Barth's *Sot-weed Factor*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* are all classical works of black humor. Black humor writers emphasize the description of the world absurdity around people and the pressure that the society had on individuals. They tend to use a helpless and cynical attitude to express the discordance between the environment and the individual. What is more, they magnify, distort the discordance to make it freak and abnormal. The moment they are ridiculous and hilarious, they make people feel sorrow and depressive. The uniqueness of black humor lies in its preposterousness and cynicism in which there is plenty of sorrow, tears, pain, melancholy, and cruelty. Therefore, among the story's bitter laughter are tears and rage.

In *The Mode of 'Black Humor'*, Brom Weber once pointed out that black humor's blackness derives from its rejection of morality and other human codes ensuring earthly pattern and order, from its readiness to joke about the horror, violence, injustice, and death that rouses its indignation, from its avoidance of sentimentality by means of emotional coolness, and from its predilection for surprise and shock.

In general, the black humor has two features:

1) The anti-novel's narration: works of black humor always adopt anti-novel narration methods and change those formula for creation of traditional novels. Writers make use of hint, contrast and symbol to create works, and thus there are only incomplete and fragment plots left in works. This kind of novels explores repetition and reinforcement to replace change and development. It is the black humor writers that mingle facetious things and serious things together, comic elements and tragic elements together. Black humor novels are adept in breaking time and space concepts, and thus integrate ingeniously time concept with science fiction. This reduplicated and multilevel structure plays a crucial role in developing plots and deepening the theme.

2) The revolution of language: Black humor works renovate the traditional language style. They cast away the elegant and magnificent language tradition and reject succinct and implicative language style. By contrast, they tend to do something unconventional or unorthodox in language style and pursue wordy, redundant and ambiguous sentence construction, which makes the novel content confusing and illusory. Thus, it, together with the lost generation and the beat generation, becomes quite

popular in American literature.

Meta-fiction: Meta-fiction is the novel about novel, which focuses on the novel's fictitious identity and the production process. The traditional novel usually pays attention to characters and events, whereas the meta-fiction novel pays more attention to how writers create novels. In these novels, writers usually declare that they are making up the work, and prefer to tell readers what techniques they explore to make up the novel, and are even keen on informing readers every related process that they make in the novel.

It is generally agreed that the term meta-fiction was denominated for the first time in the book titled *Fiction and the Figures of Life* (1970) by the American novelist and critic William Gass. He pointed out that “indeed, many of the so-called antinovels are really meta-fictions.”

Particia Waugh gives the definition of meta-fiction as follows:

Meta-fiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.

Particia Waugh also claims that “Could it not be argued instead that meta-fictional writers, highly conscious of the problems of artistic legitimacy, simply sensed a need for the novel to theorize about itself? Only in this way might the genre establish an identity and validity within a culture apparently hostile to its printed, linear narrative and conventional assumptions about “plot”, “character”, “authority” and “representation.” The traditional fictional quest has thus been transformed into a quest for fictionality.³ “Meta-fictional writers have found a solution to this by turning inwards to their own medium of expression, in order to examine the relationship between fictional form and social reality. They have come to focus on the notion that “everyday” language endorses and sustains such as power structures through a continuous process of naturalization whereby forms of oppression are constructed in apparently “innocent” representations. Meta-fiction sets up an opposition, not to ostensibly “objective” facts in the “real” world, but to the language of the realistic novel which has sustained and endorsed such a view of reality.”^[4]

Magic Realism: magic realism is a literary trend which flourished in Latin America in the 1950s. It is not a product of the literary group, but a common tendency in literary creation mainly emerging in novels and in Latin America. Magic realism or magical realism is a genre of fiction in which magical elements are blended into a realistic atmosphere in order to access a deeper understanding of reality. Matthew Strecher defines magic realism as “what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something ‘too strange to believe’”. In the Latin American world, there are many magic realist novelists, one of whom is Nobel Laureate Gabriel Garc ía M áquez, whose novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* was an outstanding and well-known work.

Magic realism writers compose works to reflect the social realist reality by exploring magic elements. Under magic realism writers' pens, there are fundamental differences between social reality in Latin America and reality in the definition of traditional realism. What magic realism tends to express is the bizarre, grotesque, and illusory social reality. In such reality, people cannot tell what life and death is, what human and ghost is, what illusion and reality is and what myth and truth is. In magic realism works, there are plenty of such magical realities, and it is just to this extent that magic realism is called magic realism.

In conclusion, the origination and development of postmodernism novels has its historical and cultural background. Generally speaking, the emergence of postmodernism literature is because of the World War II and the turbulent social life in the west after the War. People suddenly found that everything in the world has been changed. The usual social ethical standards have been lost and people become alienated and dissimilated. People are no longer people themselves but small cogs or parts of the big running machine. Suddenly, the so-called meaning is lost, and everything is game.

2.3 The Main Writing Features of Postmodernism

By comparing postmodernism novels with modernism novels and realism novels, we can generally have a clear understanding and recognition of the characteristics of postmodernism novels. In general, the most prominent characteristics of postmodernism novels are indeterminacy, tragedy and gameplay.

2.3.1 Indeterminacy

The indeterminacy of postmodernism novels is really reflected in four aspects: the theme indeterminacy, the character indeterminacy, the plot indeterminacy, and language indeterminacy.

(1) The theme indeterminacy. As we all know, the theme is certain in realism where writers usually emphasize and highlight the theme of a novel, and for modernism, although its writers are against the theme that realism advocates, yet they are not against the theme itself. Instead, they construct their own theme with extraordinarily persistent and painstaking efforts. On the contrary, postmodernism is opposite to the above-mentioned two literary trends. For postmodernism, there is no theme at all. Similarly, there is no theme in the text. Consequently, the center is lost, and the nature is lost.⁵ Everything scatters. Everything flows in the same level. There is no theme, no main themes or no sub-themes. Thus, postmodernism writers emphasize randomness, extemporaneousness and improvisation. Besides, they pay attention to readers' participation and creation. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, composed by famous British postmodernism writer John Fowles, is just a good example. On the one hand, Fowles quotes works of Marx, Engels and Hardy. On the other hand, the entire novel directly shows that it is not real but fictional. Where does the protagonist come from?

Who is the protagonist? The writer confesses that he does not know either. Since the protagonist of this novel is fictional or uncertain, then his story, his language and his quotation are all unbelievable. The theme indeterminacy is closely related to the fact that the logos, faiths, moralities, daily life norms of postmodernism writers are faced with crisis and also are lost. Take the Beat Generation for example; they are beaten in both spirit and body. Firstly, they use nihilism to view everything, and their life view is completely beaten. They are indifferent to politics, society, dream, future, people's fate and humans' future. Secondly, they use sensual feelings to understand the world, causing the lifestyle of the middle class beaten completely. They are keen on excessive drinking, taking drugs, living in groups and dissolute lifestyle. Therefore, life is an eternal road, and although people walk and stop, they are on the road all the time. All in all, postmodernism abolishes the ultimate meaning thoroughly, and postmodernism writers compose works and make pastiche casually.

In the relationship between writers and readers, the traditional literary works emphasize that writers play a dominant role in the works. When writers finish a work, which means the work is done, and the readers' reading is just a passive process. However, in the eyes of postmodernism writers, the finish of a work is at most half done, and another half waits the reader to finish by using their imagination. To this extent, the originally close works turn to be open, and the originally certain works become uncertain. The new novel is just a good example, which emphasizes Zero Writing and readers' participation. Thus, the novel's theme suddenly turns to be obscure. The new novel writers claim that "we must create a more concrete and more directly perceived world. They let the object plays roles in the form of being there and further let the being be felt by people." Therefore, the new novel writers advocate making precise and objective descriptions by not taking subjective feelings and thoughts. Roland Barthes once clearly divided literature into two parts: the lisible literature and scriptable literature. Roland Barthes (1915 - 1980), the French writer of literary theory, once in *S/Z* divided the text into lisible text, or readerly text and scriptible text, or writerly text. Lisible text refers to those static texts which can only be read instead of written. For the lisible text, readers have no choice but to accept or refuse the text, and thus reading is just an election. To this extent, the lisible text is called classical text by Barthes. When it comes to scriptible text, it is a text which can be rewritten, and readers are no longer the consumers of the text but creators of the text.

(2) The character indeterminacy. According to Hu Quansheng, in the eyes of realistic novels, characters are characters, and in the eyes of modernism novels, characters are personalities. In the eyes of postmodernism novels, characters are the shadows of characters. Luo Gang claims that "whether compared with characters of distinct personalities under realism writers' pen, or compared with characters of profound psychological connotations under modernism writers' pen, characters in postmodernism novels are fantastic, broken and uncertain." In a word, an important feature of postmodernism is the character indeterminacy. In general, there are mainly two ways that postmodernism novelists dispel character determinacy: First of all, they

purposely blur the existence of characters in the novel, and even build a novel labyrinth where there are no characters at all. For example, *The Golden Fruits* is Nathalie Sarraute's representative work. There are no any concrete characters in the entire novel but some fictional "you", "me" and "he" arguing around a book called *The Golden Fruit*, and making inane and inanimate comments. Secondly, postmodernism writers exploit the technique of parody, introducing the commonly known history and literary figures into their works. According to Thomas Kuhn's paradigm shifts theory, people come to understand the objective world based on the certain framework of previous knowledge. That is to say, people rely on the already-known judgment and conventions to understand new things. What postmodernism novelists depend on is just the already existed convention in readers' mind, thus purposely causing readers to doubt the characters in their novels. For example, the president Nixon in *The Public Burning of Robert Coover* seems to be funny and ridiculous, but because there is already a former American President Nixon in reader's mind, readers are deeply suspicious of the truth of the novel.

(3) The plot indeterminacy. Whether the three elements of traditional novels, namely plot, character and environment, or the six elements of modern novels, namely, story, character, plot, theme, environment and narrative angle, the role of plots is always significant, and indispensable. It would not be exaggerated to say that the plot is the basic element of novels. For example, the King died and the Queen died too. This is a story. However, the King died, and the Queen died because of sorrow. This is a plot. Postmodernism writers are quite fed up with traditional novels' logical and coherent plots. In contrast, they regard the plot indeterminacy as one of the basic disciplines of creating a novel. In their works, the narrative cause-effect relationship disappears; the time order is in a mess. They do in the opposite way, and build a puzzling, intricate, disordered, and mazy plot. The plots in the postmodernism novels are either too few or too many. Too few or too many plots are all the negation of the narrative certainty. What postmodernism novelists believe is just relativism and indeterminacy. For example, in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, there are three uncertain endings.

(4) The language indeterminacy. Language is an important element of postmodernism, and sometimes it even takes the place of the subject. To some extent, the indeterminacy of postmodernism is the language indeterminacy. Postmodernism philosophy believes that there is no independent and free world. Instead, the whole world is made up of language. That is to say, the world itself has language system, and language is not a tool for people to express ideas. It has its own system. And so-called facts and truth are all due to language. In postmodernism philosophy's view, it is not that I speak language but that language speaks me. Thus, people who are the center in the western traditional philosophy give ways to language. However, language is usually uncertain, and moves here and there due to the speakers' moods. Therefore, everything is uncertain, obscure, pluralistic, and deconstructed. For the details of language indeterminacy, there will be more discussions in the chapter of language experiments and language games.

2.3.2 Tragedy

In postmodern literature, the definition of tragedy has become less precise. The most fundamental change has been the rejection of Aristotle's dictum that true tragedy can only depict those with power and high status. Arthur Miller's essay "*Tragedy and the Common Man*" (1949) argues that tragedy may also depict ordinary people in domestic surroundings. British playwright Howard Barker has argued strenuously for the rebirth of tragedy in the contemporary theatre, most notably in his volume *Arguments for a Theatre*. "You emerge from tragedy equipped against lies. After the musical, you're anybody's fool," he insists. Critics such as George Steiner have even been prepared to argue that tragedy may no longer exist in comparison with its former manifestations in classical antiquity. In *The Death of Tragedy* (1961) George Steiner outlined the characteristics of Greek tragedy and the traditions that developed from that period. In the *Foreword* (1980) to a new edition of his book Steiner concluded that 'the dramas of Shakespeare are not a renaissance of or a humanistic variant of the absolute tragic model. They are, rather, a rejection of this model in the light of tragic-comic and "realistic" criteria.' In part, this feature of Shakespeare's mind is explained by his bent of mind or imagination which was 'so encompassing, so receptive to the plurality of diverse orders of experience.' When compared to the drama of Greek antiquity and French classicism Shakespeare's forms are 'richer but hybrid'.

2.3.3 Gameplay

Another salient feature of postmodernism literature is that literature turns to be a game. Postmodernism writers believe that it is the language that creates the reality. So a fictitious world is made up by the fictitious language. The approach of narrating in traditional novels is just the one who creates the fictitious reality. In this way, a fictitious story is made up to reflect a fictitious reality. So the readers come into a doubly fictitious world. The main task of the novelists is to disclose this falsity. Postmodernism novelists tend to change work to an independent and self-sufficient language system. What they want to do is neither expresses the world nor the inner feelings, nor uncovers the secret of the inner world. Instead, they tend to use language to create a new world, thus greatly lowering and even abolishing literary works' functions of reflecting life and describing reality.

In the view of postmodern writers, each language symbol is a card to play. Each way of combination of the cards is the text. In this way, literature becomes independent from the reality, and has nothing to do with the reality. Hence literature becomes meaningless games. In postmodern novels, the writer or the narrator often stands out to talk at random, so that there are many different trends of the plot are here and there and develop uncontinuously. Due to the fact that the writer or the narrator often interrupts in the novels, so the works are usually chaotic and dispersed, or even in a state of multi-center and multi-edge. The games, postmodernism writers play in their novels, have the characteristics of parody. Thus, we can see that the postmodern literature is

changed to be playful. And the language game develops to the game of the attitude of literature creation.

The games were not limited to the language game, but also extended to the game of time. Postmodernism novels digested the Diachronic and completely abandoned the factors of historical time. The scattered pieces of the material become everything.

The novels do not bring the readers the traditional sense of beauty from the linear relationship of historical transition and the final solution of the contradiction among the characters. They just bring the existence of art in the perpetual present reading. In this way, art becomes the pure and direct sense of the present. Postmodernism writers no longer follow the writing process of beginning, middle and end. Time is spatialized and becomes to be perpetual present. The relationship between the characters and their past changed into the one of space due to the disappearance of the factor of time. In *London Fields*, the present of the characters is directly related to their future by a predicted murder.

Postmodernism need to do nothing but sinking into the various games and playing it to make fun and pursue abundant meaning

Chapter Three Indeterminacy in *London Fields*

3.1 Theme Indeterminacy

Theme indeterminacy is one of the important features of postmodernism works. In the postmodern novels, you can hardly find a theme which is so-called more important. These novels have both essential and potential themes. *London Fields* is one of such novels. We can not pick out a certain theme in it.

3.1.1 Crisis of Peace

As we know, with the first atomic bomb being exploded somewhere on the Monte Bello islands in Australia in October 1952, Britain became one of the atomic powers in the world. At the same time, Britain set up its own nuclear power plants. The atomic bomb inevitably accompanies the fear of war and destruction. In fact, a number of works of art and literature disclose directly or indirectly the tension of the bomb as a protest against nuclear weapons. *London Fields* is such a kind of work. The story is set in London in 1999 against a backdrop of environmental, social and moral degradation, and the looming threat of world instability and nuclear war.

Martin Amis, as a leading postmodern writer, has been known notoriously to pay much attention to the threat of nuclear apocalypse. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Amis remained a strong critic of nuclear proliferation. In 1987, he published a collection of short stories, *Einstein's Monsters*. The five stories included in the collection were all set in the shadow of nuclear destruction, and the collection was preceded by a polemical anti-nuclear essay "Unthinkability". The essay, in which Amis announced unequivocally his disapproving attitude towards the atomic bomb, was regarded as a manifesto to fight nuclear threat to the bitter end. As a humanistic writer paying close attention to social problems, Amis made up his mind to pay more attention on the themes of nuclear threat, which became one of his main themes in his following works. As a result, in 1989 Amis published his new novel *London Fields*. This novel continued the apocalyptic characters before the new millennium in *Einstein's Monsters*.

A critic commented that Amis paid attention on the nuclear threat to contemporary life in *London Fields* published in 1989. He was right. As a writer who is always concerning the omnipresent threat brought by nuclear weapon, he extended the anxiety of the nuclear age to the width of panorama. It seems that the whole novel is obviously or even overly emphasizing the threat of nuclear.

London Fields portrays a desperate city full of tragedy color. In the city, the threat of nuclear disaster is always haunting the public. Lingering threat of nuclear war has

brought the crisis to contemporary London. Peace has become precarious. This is where the tragedy of the society lies. In the novel, the whole world is facing desperate situation with the Crisis. The race of nuclear arms is developing towards the end of global destruction, and the earth is facing the crisis of destruction at any time. Apocalypse, the last chapter of the Bible, records St. John's revelation for the end of the world, which is called the Christian Doomsday. Amis used the quotation from Christianity here in the novel, and his aim is not to promote religion, but to highlight the potential great destruction to human beings brought by the war of nuclear.

However, no matter how truly people are hoping that the war of nuclear yet occurred will never happen, the fear of it is always haunting around modern people. In fact, the four characters penned by Martin Amis in *London Fields* are all in the shadow of fear of nuclear. This is their forever nightmare.

For instance, Guy is reading books about the war, and he talks with his friend about the long-term impact of the attack on Pearl Harbor. We can see that though the two world wars have past, the world has not gotten rid of the instable factors. On the contrary, the threat of nuclear has become a demon bothering modern people in a new form. This is accompanied by the endless violence and death. Again, Samson's father's work is related to nuclear weapon, which makes Samson inevitably infected the phobia of nuclear. As a matter of fact, Samson himself is dying because of a disease, the symptoms of which suggest that the patient has suffered the nuclear radiation. In the novel, it seems that Samson is haunted by the fear of nuclear all the time, even when he is making comments. He often chooses the vocabulary related to nuclear unconsciously. For example, he says Missy's dream is not like his nightmare with the nuclear sizzlings in it. In a word, the fear of nuclear is always haunting around Samson.

The fear of nuclear seems to make ordinary people numbed. They even discuss the nuclear issue in their daily conversation. While Nicola and Keith are talking about the origin of the word bikini, she explains to Keith that the word bikini is originally derived from the Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands, which was the nuclear weapon test site from 1946 to 1954. Then she continued the conversation in a casual tone. She told Keith "first, atomic bomb. Then, in the Fifties, the Super: the hydrogen bomb." (127) What is even worse is that they can talk about the nuclear issue in such a casual tone, as if they are not talking about the nuclear issue but the weather. Sometimes people even make fun with the terminological words about nuclear issue. For instance, once Keith goes to a restaurant and orders his dish, he describes his potato with the nuclear vocabulary undernuked and overnuked. What's more Nicola has a friend called Enola Gay who has given birth to a child and named the baby Little Boy. As we all know, Enola Gay is the American plane which dropped the first atomic bomb to Hiroshima in Japan on 6th August, 1945, and Little Boy is the codename of that bomb. Here the baby Enola has given birth to is very horrible. In this way, Amis's obvious condemn to nuclear weapon is reflected in the most simple but best way. In fact, one critic believes that the heroine's name Nicola implies to nuclear war, because the pronunciation of these two words is very similar.

As can be seen from the above analysis, *London Fields* reflects the prevailing crisis that London was facing at that time, which is also where the tragedy of the city embodies.

3.1.2 Crisis of Faith

Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, thus a new era was created in the British history. Since then, post-Keynesian monetarism started to dominate not only the economy of the UK, but also the ideology of the country. With the pursuit of material wealth has become a fashion, money replaces the human beings and has become the invisible God. However, with the expansion of the material comes the barren spirit. Specifically, the most obvious change in cultural fields is the abandon of God.

London Fields, published in 1989, naturally captures the era characters of Britain in 1980s. Amis penned a world permeated with rejection of faith and filled with belief-lost despair. In such a society where faith collapsed, people completely lost the spiritual pillar, and repeated their numb life day after day.

In the religious tradition, the omnipotent God represents the power and virtue of rescuing all human beings. But here God becomes the incarnation of evil. He can not bring people spiritual salvation.

Firstly, the omnipresent and omnipotent God here in the novel turns to be a bar waiter. Although this “God” is still capitalized, he apparently has no ability to provide the spiritual support to the public. Amis is crying out: God is not dead, but that is much more terrible than death. The crisis of faith here is definitely not a joke of alarmism.

In fact, the crisis of faith has already reached a very frightening proportion. Blasphemy against God has become a minor issue. For example, Nicola is particularly keen on such blasphemy. She often imagines the romantic moments between herself and God. It is said in the text, “He (God) had slept with her (Nicola) once, and once only: she did that to show Him what he would be missing for ever and ever. In bed Nicola had made Him do the act of doubledarkness: the doublebeast with only one back. Then never again.”(121) In this way, Nicola visualizes herself tormenting God to death, making Him cry in the street, telephone and telepathize, follow her and even promise to marry her and have her live at His place. Yet Nicola tells God to go away.

The lofty image of God collapsed here, and replaced by a nasty villain. In order to meet his carnal desire, this rogue shamelessly begs for a woman who has him played in her hand. With the collapse of the image of God, comes the crisis of faith.

At the same time, with the help of his clever way of naming places, Amis makes the spiritual crisis in the novel more prominent.

For example, Amis intentionally names a street All Saints Road which is full of irony sense. Since even the image of God has collapsed, not to mention the so-called saint. Also in such a novel with the loss of faith, the name of a racetrack turns out to be Mecca. It is known that Mecca is the center of Islamic world in Middle East. Mecca is not only the birth place of Prophet Muhammad but also the place where he founded the religion of Islam. For Muslims, the Mecca is a holly place. Each devout Muslims are

eager to have at least one opportunity to pilgrimage there in their lifetime. This is the cornerstone on which the Muslims build their faith. However, in *London Fields* where the faith is gone together with God, Amis picked the name Mecca on purpose, aiming to constitute a striking contrast and remind people to keep the sad fact that they are living in an era where there is no faith. And a society with no faith is really a tragedy.

On Guy's way to visit his mother-in-law, he "had an early dinner in the Puritan Lounge, after a Virgin Mary in the May flower Room."⁽⁴²³⁾ Puritan, Virgin Mary and Mayflowers, these are all words with strong religious color. Amis designedly to use these vocabularies in order to contrast with the despairing fact depicted in the novel. He wants to tell people that the good days are gone, and now the world is facing the crisis of faith.

Martin Amis is also good at naming the characters in his novel. For instance, he tactfully names the president's wife Faith. As we have seen from all above, this is an era without faith. Therefore, the name Faith has great irony meaning which highlights the well-known sad fact. Even worse, as if Amis has seen the readers' imagination, so he has a plot arranged to make Faith dead. In this way, Martin Amis striped the possibility for *London Fields* to regain the faith.

The four characters of the novel often meet in a bar named Black Cross. The name — Black Cross deepens the sense of the crisis of faith. Cross as a symbol of Bible is always associated with religious salvation. On the contrary, black is a color representing death and despair. Thus, it can be understood that Cross points to salvation, but Black rejects the possibility of salvation. It is obvious Amis expressed his disappointment toward the crisis of faith.

In fact, the completely numbed public seems to have been used to the life without faith. It is said that "well, people still wanted the goods, the stuff for which vicars of various kinds were the middlemen. But they didn't want vicars."⁽¹²⁾ The world is facing the coming destruction, but the characters in the novel are so powerless. Pre-millennial London is in a desperate situation. Helpless, people have to continue their numb life.

3.2 Emotional Indeterminacy

London Fields is one of the representatives of postmodernism novels. Martin Amis portrayed a picture of a chaotic and decadent city with his specific postmodern methods. He demonstrated the different emotions among different people. The emotions depicted in the novel, such as the love between women and men, between parents and children are all perverted and uncertain. The basic idea of beauty and ugliness, life and death is in chaos, too. So the prevailing dilemma of living in the postmodern and cruel environment seems like a ruined city. In a word, all the emotions in the novel are chaotic and indeterminate.

3.2.1 Emotional Confusion Between Two Sexes

Characters under Martin Amis's pen are often androgynous, and the normal characteristics of the sexes are totally subverted. In *London Fields*, Amis describes Nicola Six that she has black fluff above her upper lip. What's more, she is virile and strong in personality, so she always takes the initiative in the relationship with men. On the contrary, the men in the novel are not so virile as Nicola. Guy is cowardly and hesitant, and passive in the relationship with women. Keith is crazy and simple, and is almost controlled by Nicola. This series of characters with confused sexual features are the deep exposure of the social phenomenon that the gender roles are in dislocation in the modern world.

In this novel, the male characters generally become the weak, but the female character – Nicola, is interpreted to the representative of strength and force. She calmly looks for her murderer and orderly plans for her life. Nicola can totally control her own life like males do in a normal society. In the triangular relationship among Nicola, Keith and Guy, Nicola is in an active position all the time. She controls the two men, and makes them totally subservient to her. Outrageous Keith becomes cautious in front of Nicola. He relies on Nicola for a living, and he plays a passive role on the sex issue, too. And between Guy and Nicola, the story is about cheating and being cheated. Nicola subverts the tradition and becomes the cheater, and Guy becomes the defenseless victim. We can say that Nicola is the completely subversive of the traditional woman image. The traditional social woman roles, such as daughter, wife, and mother are all meaningless to her. The traditional qualities given by the society and history are completely converted by her. She is unfilial to her parents, not to mention any love emotions. She has no idea of chastity or shame. She subverts the male-dominated tradition in sex, and becomes the true dominator. Her rebellion shows great firm. She breaks the hierarchical relationship of male subject and female object and remains no hesitation or reserve, which is totally different from traditional women. In Martin Amis's view, when females take the most indulgent and bold actions to fight against the male-dominated society, the society will definitely be in a mess. It is the fierce competition that causes the loss of male power as well as the rise of female power. Such deformed fight between the two genders makes *London Fields* the place of death in the postmodern context.

The substance of the emotional confusion between sexes is outrageous ugly. The dirty relationship between sexes indicates the emotion reversal, responsibility perversion and relation chaos. As a result, under no circumstances will male or female assume the responsibility to reform the society which is almost in a mess. This crazy state itself is a kind of escape, and abandon of life.

And the sex depicted by Amis in the novel is extremely ugly, too. There is no love in the whole society and all lives, just like Keith's life, which is filled with violence and eroticism. Nicola knows that there is no emotion in sex, only odor of money. She masters all the erotic skills, because when sex is broken away from love, there are only

pure skills and norms, or knowledge, which is very easy to learn, about sex after dismembered emotions.

Sex replaces love and emotion, and this becomes ubiquitous in the society. Keith keeps various sexual relationships with women of different ages; Guy has an affair with his wife's sister; Nicola makes love with different men. The reason why emotions are confused and sex replaces love is the death of love. Everything about love becomes the samples of history, only leaving sex behavior without any emotional meaning.

It is a tradition that everything is under rational domination in the western world. However, it is when rational thinking and analysis permeate every field, and the emotional and intuitive world is destroyed mercilessly, people feel the panic brought by rational thinking. What rational knowledge brings to us is the success of competition, technology and business, but at the same time we lose the reality of life, the home of soul, the truth of emotion and the eventually existence of human beings. When the emotion is lost for too long, it will never be found back by all means. If we still want call the relationship between the characters emotion, it is the emotion that is perverted, chaotic and lifeless.

In *London Fields*, the power of men is completely lost. The power of men is always in the dominant position, but here the loss of the power symbolizes the loss of the traditional order of the modern world.

3.2.2 Emotional Abnormalities Between Two Generations

Not only the relationship between sexes, but also the one between two generations is extremely ugly and hideous. The relationship between parents and children should be natural and stable, but here in the novel, it becomes unprecedentedly indifferent and distorted.

Debi, who is an only 12-year-old girl, keeps a sexual relationship with Keith and several other men. The person who facilitates the situation and benefits from it is her "not bad" mother. The relationship between them is selling and being sold. Guy with his son Marmaduke, and Keith with his daughter Kim show the ugly relationship between two generations, and present the frightening ugliness.

The relationship between Guy and Marmaduke is completely abnormal and absurd. The readers can feel anything, such as hurt, ridicule, distrust and even hatred but no emotion. Guy lives a very rich life. The birth of Marmaduke should bring Guy happiness and joy, but in fact the birth of the child suddenly makes Guy's life a horror film full of thrilling bloody scenes. When Guy makes love with his wife, Marmaduke stretches out his fist and hit Guy to blood; when Guy is carrying him on his back, he bites Guy's neck and doesn't let him go; when Guy kiss his wife for goodbye, he pokes his eyes which almost makes Guy blind. The man-cub, what Marmaduke is called by Guy, often gives his father "a powerful eye-poke or a jet of vomit, a savage rake of the nails, of at the very least an explosive sneeze." (21) In short, Marmaduke brings Guy nothing happy or joyful. He seems like radioactive substance, and makes his parents tremble, sob and staggering gait. The main purpose of his birth is to constantly look for

target to destroy, and try his best to destroy everything. The relationship between Guy and Marmaduke is a symbol of human being's self-development and self-destruction. People's emotions and minds are out of control, completely in a chaotic state. We can not distinguish who is enemy and what is good or evil. Violence and destruction are everywhere. In modern society, the consuming a lot of energy, the great carnage of modern wars, and the nuclear weapons which is precarious to destroy the whole earth at any time, are all the threats that human beings are facing. When people's emotions are totally confused, and when a baby becomes a violent monster, all value and faith collapse and become trash. The shocking disordered situation unequivocally validated the future world of death predicted by Nicola.

Between Keith and his daughter Kim, it is quite another kind of hideous relationship. Keith regards Kim as a dispensable thing. When Nicola asks him whether he has a child, he even answers no. After a while, he finally remembers that he has a little daughter. So we can clearly see Keith's attitude toward his daughter. Kim has nothing worth to be loved in Keith eyes, even worse she becomes the object of his curse. Keith never talks about his daughter on any occasion unless he is drunk. He has never does his duty to his daughter as a father. He believes that kids are women's work, and shirk all his responsibilities. He continues his leching life and becomes even more serious. On Kim's little body, there are many scars due to little care. As father and daughter, the relationship between Keith and Kim can be called a postmodern allegory, which means the death of the final human emotion. Among the ubiquitous deaths, "the gentle feeling for children would naturally be the last thing to disappear". (364) Among human beings relationships, their indifferent relationship is the most thorough alienation and the most ruthless perversion in the postmodern context. It means the trampling on human's future and the indifference of their own fate. The intergenerational relation patterns seem to clearly prove that if "London Fields" goes on to be indulged, the future will definitely be destroyed by people themselves.

3.2.3 Emotional Perversion Between Life and Death

On the eve of the new millennium, death became a common phenomenon. It seems that everything is dying. "A dead cloud. The Death of the Novel. The Death of Animism, the Death of Naïve Reality, the Death of the Argument from Design, and (especially) the Death of the Principle of Least Astonishment. The Death of Planet. The Death of God. The death of love."(362) It is because of the ubiquitous death, the three male characters jump the queue and scramble to act as the murderer of Nicola. Among all the deaths, love is the last and the cruelest one. The death of love at last declares the death of everybody.

Nicola's expectation of death is actually her last ceremony to pursuit love, aiming to prove the failure of looking for love. Nicola predicts her own death and orderly gets ready for it calmly. Death brings her nothing, so she is very calm to make plans for her murder. She even has plan A and plan B. Her plan of the murder process is complex and delicate. Her dying process shows a kind of attitude, which is surreal action that shocks

other people. All her expressions of indifference and cynicism are her negative and helpless response to her despair to the meaningless world. She clearly masters every step in her process of being murdered, during which she appears as the director and the decision maker. This is her last protest to the society without emotions and souls. The nails she drives in her own coffin are actually the ones she drives in the coffin for the whole society. Her desire of being murdered is very firm, because in that society, death is the only safe place which is inviolable. She is very aware that the society is not the place where human beings live, and she is always lost in her imagination of her murder plan. Death gives her final success, so she is even appreciate to death. As stated in the text: "She welcomed and applauded thee death of just about anything. It was company. It meant you weren't quite alone."(362)

In this way, life and death are absolutely subverted from the traditional sense under Martin Amis's pen. Life is not worth to look forward to; on the other hand death is not scary. The relationship between life and death becomes extremely chaotic. Human beings will lose everything soft and beautiful in the future, and the whole world will become a ruined city, only leaving indifference and evil. The people who remain the memory of love and hope of future, like Nicola, will definitely abandon the society, even plan to be murdered. We can see that Nicola is still able to tell good from evil from her attitude toward death.

Besides Nicola's resolute being murdered, the other characters in the novel are kind of connected to death. Their deaths are showed on that they cannot distinguish between good and evil, and do not know the worth of life and the meaning of death. They live like zombies in the modern society. Guy Clinch, though lives a rich life, does not feel the existence of life. He feels his life stitched up and surrounded by walls. His life is closed. The life he is looking for is death—the death of sense and the death of bluntness.

Keith is an enthusiastic fan of darts. If he has a dream, it must be to win money by darts. In order to stress the importance of darts, Amis even drew a picture of a big dart board. In the novel, darts represent the stupid pursuit without emotions. This kind of pursuit relies on nothing but the arrangement and domination of the unreasonable numbers. These numbers, scoring and dreams without emotions bring nothing but the extreme perversion and the death of spirit.

Under Martin Amis's pen, the basic idea of life and death is perverted and chaotic in the postmodern ruined city.

3.2.4 Emotional Upset Between Beauty and Ugliness

Many representative figures of modernism have criticized the aesthetic metamorphosis brought by the loss of faith in the modern society. Nietzsche shouted out that "God is dead." Eliot called the society with no spiritual support "Waste Land". Beckett is "Waiting for Godot" in desperate expectation. Among all these works, we can feel the fear for the physical world which is sweeping everything away, and for the state of inner emptiness. Behind these fears are essentially the escape of the plight that

spirit is homeless, the fight against the fate that human beings have no place to escape, and the call of beauty and goodness. However, in *London Fields*, under Amis's pen, there is no fear or struggle at all. All the characters are in the numb and mechanical state, like living dead with dead emotions, dead dreams and dead spirit. In other words, people do not expect beauty or escape ugliness any more. People abandon the pursuit of beauty, or we can say they simply don't know what beauty is. This is the greatest tragedy of postmodern people. Here Amis put forward a few questions that when emotion is exhausted and perverted, how can beauty exist? When genders are confused, parents and son become enemies, life and death are meaningless and the reference objects of beauty disappear, how can we confirm what beauty is? If beauty cannot be confirmed, what will the outcome of beauty be?

Under Amis's pen, the reference objects of beauty disappear and become the deserter in the postmodern society. What is more frightening is that ugliness turn to be the power to control. In the religious tradition, the omnipotent God represents the power and virtue of rescuing all human beings. But here God becomes the incarnation of evil. He can not bring people spiritual salvation, or even can not bring the Nietzschean terror. That Nietzsche declared "God is dead", shows people's spiritual world becomes vacuous fear after losing the leader in spirit. However, in *London Fields*, it seems God comes back to life from Nietzsche's incantation. But God in the novel has become a villain, and he is not the representative of beauty any more. In order to meet His desire for sex, he wants to make love with Nicola, but He is told to "Get lost". God is the creator of the oldest scam in the history, and He is also a liar. The description of God destroyed the faith in the most fundamental and cruelest way, and perverted people's value thoroughly. The loss of faith leads to the current situation—a world with perverted beauty and ugliness. "Only fields of operation and observation, only fields of electromagnetic attraction and repulsion, only fields of hatred and coercion. Only force fields."(163) There is nothing but beauty, kindness and love here. But we only can find the word "beauty", which has nothing to do with beauty or ugliness, since even happiness is named disgusting happiness.

"If London is a spider's web, then where do I fit in? Maybe I'm the fly. I'm the fly." (24) If the spider's web represents that the ugly society relentlessly destroys people's pursuit and dreams, then what the society destroys is also ugly. In traditional novels, when people's dream or pursuit is killed by the society, we see something beautiful is destroyed. But in *London Fields*, people's dream, pursuit even the people themselves have no values. Human beings or their behavior, their pursuit are the same as flies, dirty and shameful.

Keith lives by robbery with violence at first and later changes to non-violent cheating. He carefully designs to cheat the rich Lady Barnaby, and leaves the 77-year-old lady nothing. In order to get payment, the writer Samson observes Nicola's murder plan from the sidelines all along. What surprises the readers is that he murdered Nicola and becomes the murderer when Keith and Guy escape from the responsibility of murder, so that his book will be sensational after his death. In such a world losing all

value judgments, beauty and ugliness become withered samples. And there is only unprovoked hatred among strangers. When Guy drives, he always feels that “the old man you stop for at the zebra who crosses slowly, with undiminished suspicion: no forgiveness there, not ever.”(44) Everyone has no basic idea of beauty and ugliness.

All about beauty and ugliness is chaotic and perverted. The black guy in the bar calls himself Shakespeare. A villain, who is infatuated with pornography and darts like Keith, is named after a genius. Keith’s family name is Talent, which means genius. Without the basic idea of basic and ugliness, people hurt each other and wait for the final death. For Martin Amis, the perverted state of beauty and ugliness is the omen of human death in the postmodern context.

Martin Amis uses his specific postmodern techniques to exhibit us the postmodern emotions. Martin Amis knows that all beautiful emotions and dreams are lost. Without emotions and the basic judgment of beauty and ugliness, humans become very panic and crazy. People begin to be lost in money, wine and drugs within the endless loneliness and fear. People try to grab something to comfort their vacuous minds. The perverted desires lead to the perverted minds and emotions. People’s last dignity is destroyed by the chaotic and perverted value and aesthetic orientation. On the eve of the new millennium, Amis vividly depicted such a postmodern city with perverted emotion.

Chapter Four Tragedy in *London Fields*

4.1 Tragedy of Characters

London Fields is a story about death of love. It is set on the eve of the new millennium, and tells a tragic love story among a woman and three men. Each of them is an embodiment of tragedy. Nicola is disappointed at love, and plans to be murdered. Keith even has no love in him and lives loveless life. Guy is eager to love and to be loved, but his pursuit to love ends with failure. Samson, an unknown writer, lives in living death, only cries to console himself, and finally become the murderer.

4.1.1 Nicola's Despairing Love

Nicola Six is the heroine of the novel, who is also the murderee in the story of murder and being murdered. She is a tragic character tortured by the death of love. The murderee Nicola designs her own murder, looks for her murderer and set the date and place of murder. It seems that she is an audience out of the story, or an ingenious director during the whole process. Nicola has black fluff above her upper lip. What's more, she is virile and strong in personality, so she always takes the initiative in the relationship with men. On the contrary, the men in the novel are not as virile as Nicola. Guy is cowardly and hesitant, and passive in the relationship with women. Keith is crazy and simple, and is almost controlled by Nicola. Nicola is suffering the dying illness of love. As a girl who has the special knack of reading the future, she has "one or two assurances: that no one would ever love her enough, and those that did were not worth being loved enough by." (17) So her tragedy about love is kind of her destiny.

Nicola's love tragedy can be seen from the following three aspects: her love to parents, to friends and to her lovers.

Nicola became an orphan since she was very young, so she feels nothing about her parents. About her parents she had no feelings one way or the other: this was her silent, inner secret. They both died, anyway, together, as she had always known they would. So why hate them? So why love them? (13)

What shocks the readers is that Nicola does not understand why she should love her parents just after they had been dead for quite a long time. The relationship between Nicola and her parents tells us the precious family affection has been replaced by indifference.

In terms of friendship, Nicola has only one friend named Enola Gay. They met in a children's home, but soon Enola left Nicola. From then on, Nicola admits that she has no contact with her friend. More surprisingly, the readers will see that Enola is just a

character imagined by Nicola, which means Nicola has no friends to love or be loved in her life at all. Nicola is definitely a loser in making friends.

For love, the death of love is fully embodied on her. In Martin Amis's works, sex is always just sex, having nothing to do with love. Nicola is such kind of character under Amis's pen. She has a lot of amazing quotes. These sentences may make the readers confused, but they actually reflect her love life.

She says, "And if love was dead or gone then the self was just self, and had nothing to do all day but work on sex." (298) If love has been dead, then everyone will become a dead body. Even when making love, they cannot feel true love but the desire of body. For Nicola, sex is just sex because of the death of love. The description above exactly reveals her true life. In fact, she herself admits that her sexual life is perverted.

What's more, the name Amis gave to the heroine confirms her sordid love life, too. The pronunciation of her family name Six is familiar to that of the word sex, which makes the readers to guess Amis's intention of choosing the name. Keith, the cheater, often calls Nicola Six Nicola Sex by mistake. Though Amis repeatedly stress that it is because Keith is an illiterate and he cannot read some of the words exactly. Of course, his explanation cannot convince the clever readers. On this point, Amis probably wanted to suggest that there is only dirty sex but no love in her tragic life.

The most shockingly, Nicola decided to gain the sexual gratification from a wall. She says "but the contact felt just right." (457) Due to the fact that her love has been dead, making love becomes her physiological instinct. No matter whether she is making love with a man or not, it does not matter to Nicola. This is why she chose a cold wall to get sexual gratification.

For Nicola, love has come to the end. Since love is the most precious emotion in human being's life, the death of love leads everything to the end. In her opinion, her mouth is a deep trap filled with lies and used to kiss. This proves that all in her life is cheating and sex.

It is obvious that Amis's overstatement of Nicola's mouth shows the tragic fact that love in her life has gone forever. Nicola even transforms making love into performance. She becomes a good actress, and she is able to act any role needed by the audience. In a word, Nicola is just a doll without any true emotions. For her, all her love and being loved are tragedy.

4.1.2 Keith's Loveless Life

Keith Talent is a rogue character in the novel. He is crazy and simple. He lives on cheating people. Love, the beautiful dream, has disappeared on him. The death of love makes Keith tortured by his deserted spiritual world. Due to the death of love, he loses himself in his own spiritual world and lives a chaotic life worse than death.

Keith cannot establish a good relationship with his wife Kath. He regards her as something that is additional to his two main interests: darts and pornography. In fact, we can see Keith poor spiritual world through his attitude toward his wife.

When Kath first appears in the novel, Keith was cheating on everybody crazily.

After this description, the writer continued “especially his wife.” The word “especially” confirms a tragic fact to us: Keith doesn’t love Kath at all. What’s more, Keith does not feel gratitude to Kath, for she takes care of the whole family and child. He always believes that it is women’s work or responsibility to take care of babies. In addition, he complains Kath impatient when looking after their daughter. When Samson asked him to love his wife more, Keith changed the subject to his favorite darts. Darts are far more important than his wife. From all above, we see no signal of love, and love in his heart has been dead.

In addition, Keith does not take care of his own daughter. When Kath gave birth to Kim, Keith didn’t act as the other fathers of being delighted, instead he “sighed heavily”. What’s more, Keith never considered smoking less for Kim’s sake. Keith regards Kim as a dispensable thing. When Nicola asks him whether he has a child, he even answers no. After a while, he finally remembers that he has a little daughter. “He never mentions his girl Kim, except when he is especially drunk.”(79) The worst is that Kim is physically hurt by Keith. For instance, Samson sees for several times “a new bruise also on the little ass with its precocious nobility of curve, and three new cigarette burns, again in a triangle” (410) just on Kim’s little body.

There is another scene that reflects the indifferent relationship between Keith and his family. Keith was once chased by a group of rogues. So one day when the doorbell rang, Keith threatened his wife to open the door. For he was afraid it was the rogues who wanted to kill him standing outside the door. Keith does not understand why they want to threaten him with his family. He thinks their method is out of time. And he believes no men will stand out to protect his family on a dangerous moment. On the contrary, he will choose to stand aside to look at them being hurt. If danger really comes, he will definitely try to hide himself under the bed. We get to know from the novel that if someone wants to find Keith, home is the most impossible place.

As we know, home is one of the most peaceful places for human beings, both physically and mentally. On this point, Keith is a loser, and he has always been living in a loveless world.

His barren spiritual world can also be seen from his hostile attitude toward people. Once Keith made a noise at home, and his neighbors came to protest. To people’s surprise, Keith did not apologize to them or stop his noisy action. He made more noise and ignored the neighbors’ protest. His reaction is incredible to normal people but ordinary to him, because he is a man with no love inside. Even Nicola said “the capacity for love was extinct” (72) in Keith.

For Keith, true love has never ever existed. He reads *Wuthering Heights* as pornography instead of a touching love story. He does not understand the noble love Emily Bronte depicted. Keith’s ridiculous misunderstanding of the novel again reveals his dirty and barren spiritual world.

As a man in living death, Keith is going to “die or go mad”. This is the true reflection of his heart. It is reasonable for Keith to die or go mad, because he lives a loveless life in such a indifferent and cold world.

Keith lost the capable for love, and distanced himself from his family and the society. This makes Keith live in failures. Tortured by his barren spiritual world, he looks for hope in darts, television and pornography. In this way, he wastes his life day after day, and continues his tragedy in the endless loveless life.

4.1.3 Guy's Vain Pursuit

Guy Clinch, who is a rich man, is also one candidate of the murderers. It seems that he is in short of nothing, but he also owns nothing. He "had a tremendous amount of money, excellent health, handsomeness, height, a capriciously original mind; and he was lifeless."(27) Though Guy owns a vast wealth for his extravagance, but he is extremely poor in spirit. Due to the death of love in life, Guy has become a loser in the spiritual level, and he is drifting in the spiritual hell endlessly.

First, Guy's childhood is not happy. When he recalled the days he fell in love with his wife Hope, before they met each other, "they had both been unhappy at home and they had both felt underloved."(87) This shows us that when Guy is a little boy, he did not get enough care and love from his parents.

In addition, the couple, Guy and his wife Hope, is not getting along well with each other. They live in the same house, but they cheat on each other. Amis implies that wherever Guy goes, he does not take his wife Hope with him. It is Lizzyboo, Hope's sister. What's more, to Hope's surprise, she saw Guy crying with Lizzyboo's clothes in his hand. This leads the readers to guess how dirty Guy's inner world is. In his mind, the intimate relationship between husband and wife has been replaced by the dirty fornication. Not only Guy but also Hope is not loyal to their marriage. She has an affair with another man. In a word, the couple looks like strangers instead of husband and wife.

Thirdly, Guy gets no joy from being father, because his son Marmaduke is an incarnation of destruction. Because of his perverted Oedipus complex, Marmaduke regards his father Guy as his enemy. It seems that hurting his father brings him great fun. "As Guy entered the warmth-field of his wife's body, Marmaduke's twinned fists thumped down into his open face."(82) Terrible situations like this occur almost every day, and they all get used to that. It is these situations make Guy feel no joy from being father. Because Marmaduke keeps hurting him, Guy starts to doubt that he is taught by his wife to do so. And his doubt makes him alienated from his wife.

The loveless life makes Guy depressive, and forces him to end the love. He often says that "hard for love. Hard for love. Love got hard to do."(419)

Ironically, Guy, tortured by the loveless life is reading a book named *Love*. What's more, Guy likes to imagine about love. He often speaks of love in daily conversations. These depictions vividly portray his inner heart longing for love. Living in the hell with dead love, Guy has to build his spiritual world with his memory and imagination. Because he knows only love can lead him out of his spiritual desert. In the despairing life without love, Guy numbs himself only with his beautiful memories.

The loss of love makes Guy live in rich material but poor spirit, because only love

can bring people spiritual support and living will. If there is no love, people become dead bodies. So, Guy is so eager to seek for true love. The reason why Guy is easily attracted by Nicola is that he wants to have a try to seek love. Obviously, his great spiritual pursuit ends with failure. This fact

Guy lives in a tragic family, in which his parents do not care for him, and his wife does not love him, even his son does not respect him. Guy is bite by the death of love in the spiritual world. And the man who is looking forward to love “looked around his life for a dimension through which some new force might propagate” (35) As a result, Guy is easily hooked by Nicola. Unfortunately, Guy starts to be played like a fool by Nicola. This experience is his failure of seeking for love. His pursuit for love is destined to be a tragedy. Martin Amis expressed his deep postmodern humanistic concern through Guy’s spiritual world.

4.1.4 Samson’s Pathetic Despair

Samson Young, an American writer, flew to London for the story of *London Fields*. He is suffering exhaustion in creation. When he met Nicola, he was kind of ecstatic. He decided to write down Nicola’s murder story and publish it so that he would be extremely successful. At first, he planned to be a witness of the murder, but later he was lured by Nicola little by little and became the final murderer at last. The sudden change of Samson looks puzzling, but taking his living conditions in account, the readers will accept his great change and find it reasonable.

Samson’s family is the first factor that influences him. Samson’s father works as a nuclear weapon researcher. In a normal family, father is an important role to help children establish a correct view of life and value, and acts as the spiritual pillar and leader. But due to Samson’s father’s job, Samson lost one of the most important emotions in family life, and that left a shadow of death in Samson’s heart.

There are several scenes shows that Samson is being tortured by his spiritual crisis.

First, Samson was surprised that Nicola and he looked at each other in the eye for more than 10 seconds. Eye contact is a common way to show friendly. But to Samson, it shocked him. People are all wearing masks of apathy.

Second, on the way back from Nicola’s home, Samson happened to meet a group of children. They gave him some candies. Samson accepted the candies but did not feel appreciate of their actions. On the contrary, he kept wondering whether they had any bad motive. He kept asking “what I am doing, accepting candy from strange children.” (63) We can see that Samson’s love has gone in his life.

Third, at the end of the novel, Samson left a letter for a friend who is also a writer. In the letter, he prophesied his death. He said he would die in peace with a smile. Samson compared himself to Nicola to stress he would be calm when facing death. He believes he will be much more peaceful than Nicola. As introduced in the former chapters, Nicola is extremely disappointed in life, and eager to be murdered all the time. But it seems that Samson is more peaceful than her. So Samson’s hopelessness and helplessness are obvious to be seen.

On the other hand, the name Samson is also a symbol of his loveless life. It reminds people the great hero in the *Old Testament*. He chooses to die together with his enemies after shamed by them. However, in *London Fields*, this Samson is a totally loser. He says, “the life isn’t over, not quite. But the love life is” (411) and “even nature was telling me I’d lost, that love has lost.” (411)

Without love, Samson loses strength. That is why he says, “you could have knocked me over with a feather.” (432)

Different from the hero, Samson Young is a tragic nobody in the novel. He loses the capacity for love, not mention to rescue the world in which he is living. He feels that nothing is worth doing to save anything and makes the decision of giving up. That is to say, Samson is succumbed to the chaotic and perverted spiritual world. And in order to fight against the despairing world and reduce his own mental torture, he picked up a female way to vent his suffering—weeping.

Samson ever said, “if the dreams have come, then can the pain be far behind?” (261) From his words, we can see how terrible the loveless life is. The origin of Samson’s words is “*Ode to the West Wind*” by Shelley, “if Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?” This romantic sentence is inspiring generations of people to follow their dreams and not to give up even in bad conditions. Amis is obviously imitating the poetry to stress Samson’s despair in such a loveless world.

Samson admitted that “love failed, in me.” (435) Samson thinks he is a withered hero suffering from the death. Though he shares the same name with the great hero, in the novel Samson turns out to be an anti-hero.

Due to his failure in spirit, Samson keeps complaining his pains. Samson is the representative of the people who are suffering mental anguish and pains on the eve of the new millennium. This is also the reason why he says “we are most of us in some kind of agony.” (62) In this way, Martin Amis forced the readers to notice modern people’s spiritual crisis.

Because of the death of love, the characters under Amis’s pen are performing their own tragedies. Nicola becomes disappointed to life, and eager to be murdered. Unconscious of the death of love, Guy seeks for love in vain. Without love, Keith lives in a living death. Even the character sharing the same name with the great hero, have no other choice but to cry. The four characters come from different places and social classes, but they are the representatives of the modern people from all classes and nationalities in such a tragic world. Amis revealed humans’ spiritual impasse through the four characters with spiritual crisis. In *London Fields*, Martin Amis successfully depicted a vivid picture of the postmodern people’s barren spiritual world tortured by the loss of love.

4.2 Tragedy of Moral

Postmodernism novels always focus on the realistic problems of the society. *London Fields* concerns the moral issue at the end of the 20th century. People live in that time lost their values and morals. Cheating became rampant in the society, and money-worship made people vicious.

4.2.1 Rampant Cheating

In *London Fields*, Martin Amis portrays a terrible scene for us. London is actually an epitome of the whole human society on the eve of the new millennium. In the novel, everything is developing toward chaos and irony. But there is a phenomenon that is worth to pay attention to. That is the rampant cheating. Through the character of Keith, Martin Amis expressed his discontent and criticism to the social evils.

Keith Talent is a thoroughly untalented local ruffian. Under Amis's pen, he is portrayed as a professional liar. And Amis ironically names the two main products which Keith uses to defraud Scandal and Outrage. Amis even arranged for a chapter to specifically describe a poor old lady who is cheated by Keith, aiming to highlight the fact that Keith conducts cheating for a living. What's more, Amis designed several opportunities to expose the sad fact that not only Keith but also the whole city of London has been corrupted by cheating. Once, Keith manages to cheat Lady Barnaby to get out of her house so that he can have the chance to ransack her home. When he sends the old lady to the airport, to Keith's surprise, the computer says Lady Barnaby's ticket is invalid. He suddenly realizes that "the cheat at the bucket-shop has cheated him." (104) Later in the novel, the readers learn that the cheat who cheats Keith is also cheated by the cheat who supplies the bucket-shop. At last Keith carefully designs to cheat the rich Lady Barnaby, and leaves the 77-year-old lady nothing. Lady Barnaby ends in a sad tragedy. There is another example. When Keith goes to steal a shop, he is surprised to find the shop has already been robbed by a thief before him. This matter reminds Keith that he was once cheated by a guy who was also cheated by another person who is a victim in the process.

Through Keith's several experiences, Amis shows the readers an awful picture of London. In this city, people are used to cheating each other. Not only Keith but also the whole society has been poisoned by the rampant cheating. So it is understandable when Keith once decides to send Nicola's stuff for repairing, Amis said "they would, of course, cheat Keith". (113)

In fact, Keith concluded that cheating is a symbol of the era. London symbolizes the entire human society. Under this kind of environment, cheating is rampant and integrity is in danger. Here Keith speaks out Amis's concerns. As a sharp observer, Martin Amis indicates that this is an era with rampant cheating. People lose their moral bottom line and lost themselves in cheating. All the characters are in the numb and mechanical state, like living dead with dead emotions, dead dreams and dead spirit. In

other words, people do not expect kindness or escape ugliness any more. People abandon the pursuit of beauty and kindness, or we can say they simply don't know what beauty is. This is the greatest tragedy of postmodern people.

4.2.2 Vicious Money-worship

Martin Amis was once interviewed by Haffenden, and Amis said that, "I have strong moral views, and they are very much directed at things like money and acquisition. I think money is the central deformity in life, as Bellow says, it is one of the evils that have cheerfully survived identification as an evil." Money-worship is indeed one of the themes that often occur in Amis's novels. In the novel *London Fields*, Amis focuses on the substance corruption. He exposed a morbid city which is drained by money with his high enthusiasm and amazing pen. The decadent London is the epitome of the whole western part. With the exposure of the bleak London, Amis showed his theme of social criticism, and he portrayed a vivid picture of a postmodern city for the readers.

In order to reveal the money-worship existing within the society in London, Amis first focuses on the London police, and mocks their heinous actions.

When a policeman comes to Black Cross pub, Amis ironically named him John Dark. In traditional culture, the police are always well respected heroes since they obliterate evil and uphold the justice. But here under Amis's pen, the figure of police is totally different from what they are in people's impression. What's more, Amis describes them as the bent copper, the tarnished badge, and the iffy filth. Worse still, everybody in the pub treats this police in a scornful way. The respect and fear that people usually show to the police all disappear. Instead, the police are scorned and teased relentlessly by the public.

Later in the novel, Amis satirizes the police for they are addicted to money. As he wrote in the novel, "have the fucking bailiffs round here anyway in a minute. Characteristically you were sent two fat guys, with ginger beards, murmuring—money's janitors (they didn't want any trouble)." (246)

Here, Amis made full use of his words to satirize and mock these policemen. They turn out to be two fat guys with beards. Their figures are completely different from what they should be in the public eye. In addition, their minds are filled with extremely terrible ideas. These ideas represent the general amorality and greed in the era of Mrs. Thatcher. The police are compared to the janitor of money. They never want to make any trouble. In the society of money first, everyone is the slave to money. Money has become the measure of all scales, and also the goals that everyone pursues. Even the consistent self-discipline police can not escape from being bribed.

For Martin Amis, his implied meaning does not need to be stated out directly, because it is reflected in the writing style. He believes that the readers can feel his implied meaning while reading and laughing at the evil of the world. Thus it can be seen that his insipid description of the police is actually the condemnation to the London's public servants in the 20th century.

Besides the police, Martin Amis also criticized the corruption of the hospital in London. The hospital is described as:

In the spare gloom of the private clinic, the most expensive they could find, Guy did his share of pacing and napping and fretting. (Hope distrusted any medical care that failed to stretch searchingly into the four figures: she liked the scrolled invoices, with every tissue and soldier of toast unsmilingly itemized; she had no time for the bargain basements and the Crazy Eddies of the National Health).(28)

As a life-saving place, hospital is always the most reliable place in the public mind. People go to the hospital for help when they feel uncomfortable. However, driven by money-worship, the hospital is charging more and more money to the patients. With the loss of sincerity, the hospitals try their best to make more money with the patients by all means. This makes the public believe that good hospitals are characterized by the high price. At the same time, hospitals seem to become ridiculous. The text goes:

How incredibly lucky that everyone was at the hospital. Let's hear it for hospitals. And for asthma, and for eczema, and for infant distress. By the time he got home, Guy was in no condition to dissimulate, to act normally, whatever that was. He was in hospital shape himself, cottony, lint-like, as if his torso were just the bandage on an injured heart. (253)

When Guy feels bad and lives in hospital, he hopes to get recovery with the care of doctors and nurses. However, to his surprise, he does not regain health but become even worse. Hospitals are playing a role who is busy making money instead of a positive part. Ironically, Guy said it is such a pleasant thing that everyone can live in hospital. Cleverly, His comments turn out to be a contrast to his tragedy later in the novel. In this way, Amis ruthlessly satirizes the hospitals.

The exposure of hospitals is actually the reflection and criticism to the corruption in hospitals. All his description of hospitals shows Amis's concern about the society he lives in.

In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, while discussing "what is postmodernism", Linda Hutcheon point out that fiction is "a form that is firmly rooted in realist representation." While studying the contemporary British novels, Philip Tew finds that "the works of writers such as Martin Amis are inflections of the social conditions of a modern urban society that seems drawn mainly from one life like our own and such apparently realistically situated parallels seem irresistible."

Martin Amis portrays a specific picture of London on the eve of the new millennium, and depicts us a typical tragic city in his unique postmodern way.

Chapter Five Gameplay in *London Fields*

As one of Martin Amis's representatives, *London Fields* is a postmodern game of time and death. The game of time focuses on the reversibility of time line and the delay of narrative time. And the game of death is about spirit and body.

5.1 Game of Time

The game of time is one of Martin Amis's works' characteristics. He has a representative work about game of time—*Time's Arrow*. It is said that *London Fields* was once considered to be named *Time's Arrow* before the final naming. So game of time is obviously seen at the very beginning of the birth of the novel.

5.1.1 Reversibility of Time

London Fields is set in 1999, which is a moment everything is going to end. The 20th century is close to the end, the heroine's death time is coming and the writer Samson is also on his deadline.

The novel starts with a murder scene which will happen a year later, but then talks about the current life. At the beginning of the novel, the so-called writer Samson is aware of all about the future. He knows everything about the murder: who the murderer and the murderee are, when and where the murder will happen, even the motive and the methods. In the following, the writer meets the murderee Nicola, and begins to get ready for the murder. It seems that the order of everything is reversed. The plot is not arranged in linear time, but roundabout to go forward.

When the story begins, the heroine Nicola and the writer Samson clearly see the future just like they know about the past. For Nicola, the story is not finished but her life is. Martin Amis made the time reversible which is the subversion of linear time.

In this novel, the boundaries of past, present and future are not clear, and the time totally lost its order. The story which is going to happen in the future can be told like the past experience, the murderer appears before the murderee, and even death can be booked like a hotel room. The time, place and methods of the murder are more accurate than the one that has already happened. The main work to do is to find the final murderer.

When the so-called author of *London Fields* Samson flew to London over the Atlantic Ocean, he went through the test of time difference. Due to the time difference, the writer can optionally control the time. And it also makes the reversibility of time

become the narrative subject. The most interesting point is that though the time flow in *London Fields* is different from the actual time, the readers do not feel the same shock brought by the back of time in *Time's Arrow*. Instead the readers feel that the time is going forward slowly during the complex process. Maybe this is the genius of the game of time in *London Fields*.

5.1.2 Delay of Time

The second dimension of game of time is the delay of the narrative time. Here the narrative time refers to the time structure of the narrative subject presented to the readers. Though the writer claims that time is always going forward at a double speed, we can feel the delay of the actual time in the novel.

From the perspective of fact, the story begins when Nicola is 34 and end when she is 35. The time span is less than a year, but the narrative time is unbearable long for the book has nearly 600 pages.

The main story is Nicola's plan of murder and being murdered, in addition with Samson's trifles which has nothing to do with the main story. Amis spent time on Samson's disputes with the famous writer Mark Asprey, his coordination and consultation with the publisher, and his romance with a woman. These trifles appear in the story as an embedded structure to occupy the readers' time.

On the other hand, Nicola has the talent that "she always knew what was going to happen next." (19) She does not only accurately predict her own death but also control the two men with her charming beauty. She successfully makes them her slaves to murder her. At the end of the novel, we find that Nicola is having an affair with the famous writer Mark Asprey who is in disputes with Samson. It is Mark who arranges Samson to write down Nicola's story. This shows that Nicola is the true mastermind to determine the process. Nicola enchanted lower-class Keith with her charming and money. As one candidate of the murderers, Keith was willing to become Nicola's mechanic. He totally forgot his mission and changed his view of life and time. Compared with his wife Hope, Keith thought "It took quite a while to wake her but it didn't take long to give her one, the wet-gowned redhead, Trish Shirt on her knees, Nicola Six and the fat moneygun in her clean white pants." (202) At the same time, Nicola also conquered upper-class Guy with her grace. She made Guy fall in love with her though he knew it was wrong, he was willing to love. Due to the love to Nicola, Guy could not play the role of murderer. Additionally, Nicola treated them two neither friendly nor aloof, which intensified the internal contradictions between the two candidates of the murder. Their internal contradictions delayed the action time of the murder.

At last, the writer Samson found that Keith and Guy could not finish the task of murder, so he killed Nicola personally. However this is the only time that he pushed the narrative time. During the whole process, he is mainly the delay of time. As an unknown writer, Samson was blamed by the publisher. In order to ensure the time of the story synchronous with that of the manuscript, he tried his best to delay the narrative

time. He went to meet the two murderers, make trouble for them and harassed Nicola again and again. What's more Samson is not confident with his works, he often asks himself "am I a reliable narrator"? He often read newspapers to console himself. He was sometimes caught in the trap set by other characters, annoyed by Keith's trouble of borrowing money, or shamed by Guy's son Marmaduke's children pornography. In this way Samson deviated from the normal narrate again and again.

London Fields is set in the future but tells a current story. In this novel, time becomes reversible and delayed by the plot. It is this kind of narrative time brings the reader special reading experience. And it is also the genius of Martin Amis's *London Fields*, as a postmodernism novel.

5.2 Game of Death

The novel *London Fields* seems like a conversation between the writer and the death, the death of characters and of love.

The heroine Nicola plans her murder carefully, and gets ready to die together with the 20th century. She designs her own murder, looks for her murderer and set the date and place of murder. It seems that she is an audience out of the story, or an ingenious director during the whole process. The so-called writer Samson infected with a nuclear radiation disease, and finally died after murdered Nicola at the end of the novel. Nicola is not afraid of death. She is very peaceful in front of death, and eager to be murdered. The reason is that there is no love in her life. Nobody loves her heart and soul. And those who seem to love her are not worth loving. Due to the existence of Nicola, the love between Keith and his wife Kath exists in name only. Guy is suffering the hit of his son Marmaduke's pornography. He falls in love with Nicola but he is played by her. If everything goes according to Nicola's plan, then the end of the novel may be the end of the world. However, thanks to Samson, he became the murderer, and changed the way of murder. In this way, he stopped the end of the world. As mentioned above, Samson is also the name of a great hero in the *Ode Testament*. Here Samson changed Nicola's prophecy, and saved the world. Through the fight between Nicola and Samson, Amis accomplished the conversation between the text and death, and prevented the end of the world. Though Nicola and Samson both died at the end of the novel, there are essential differences between their deaths, because Samson prevented the end of the world with his death.

On the other hand, Nicola lost love in her life, and this made her extremely anguished. She made up her mind to die, to be murdered. Samson claimed in the first chapter of his novel that "the girl will die. It's what she always wanted." (1) Nicola is eager to die. And she admitted that if live was dead in her life, and then there was only hatred and death left.

Nicola tried her best to ruin and shame her three murderers. She lured Guy, only to destroy his marriage. She teased Keith with her charming body. Since Keith is a foolish

rogue who is lost in pornography, Nicola plays with him with pornography. At the same time, Nicola teased Samson. This American writer was just coming to London for writing down Nicola's murder. But he was soon hooked by Nicola, and his original plan was destroyed as well. Nicola left her diary in the garden in purpose to lure Samson. Samson picked up the diary and gave back to Nicola. In this way, Nicola successfully attracted Samson's attention. In the following, Nicola gradually lured Samson become a member of her murder story. Or it can be said that the reason why Nicola lured Samson into her story is to make him the final murderer. In this way, the established plot of Samson's novel is destroyed, so as to shame and make fun of this narrator of the story. In a word, Nicola lives on preying on men.

Since Nicola is going to be murdered, to die, she is very fearless. She tries her best to destroy everything. Sometimes she even chooses to hurt herself to bring others to destruction. There is a time Samson states, "Nicola has destroyed my book, she must have felt a vandal's pleasure." (466)

As described by Nicola herself, "'That's what I am,' she used to whisper to herself after sex. 'A black hole. Nothing can escape from me. '" She really does as she says and plays a game of death with the other three men.

Conclusion

As conclusion, we now get a postmodern impression of this typical novel from all the chapters above. From the perspective of postmodernism, some of the postmodern writing techniques have been discussed in the paper. Martin Amis's *London Fields* is a novel with many postmodernism features like indeterminacy and tragedy. Thus we can easily see the postmodernism tendency of Amis's novels. In China, there are not many study achievements on Amis and his work. However, more and more critics start to pay attention to him, and their points of view are various. Most critics study Amis from the perspective of realism or magical realism while few of them discuss his works' postmodernism features. Therefore, the present author tries to analyze Amis's novel from the perspective of postmodernism, so that to help the readers to better understand his novels.

In this paper, three postmodernism writing features are talked, which are indeterminacy, tragedy and gameplay. On indeterminacy, I mainly analyze the novel form the theme indeterminacy and emotion indeterminacy. Firstly, there is not an obvious theme in the novel *London Fields*. Some people think it as a novel to reveal the nuclear crisis, but others believe that it is talking about the faith crisis. Some critics even hold the view that the novel is about the death of love. There is never a certain answer to it. Also in the emotions, we can also find the same situation. The emotions depicted in the novel, such as the love between women and men, between parents and children are all perverted and uncertain. The basic idea of beauty and ugliness, life and death is in chaos, too. We have no definite idea of their emotions.

In terms of tragedy, as a postmodernism novel, Amis put tragedy on the characters and their morals. The four main characters in the novel are all full of tragic color. Nicola is disappointed at love, and plans to be murdered. Keith even has no love in him and lives loveless life. Guy is eager to love and to be loved, but his pursuit to love ends with failure. Samson, an unknown writer, lives in living death, only cries to console himself, and finally become the murderer. Cheating became rampant in the society, and money-worship made people vicious. These tragedies help us have a better understanding of the novel. What's more, this chapter shows Amis's postmodern humanistic care for the society on the eve of the new millennium.

At last, we come to the gameplay in the novel. As a postmodern novel, Amis used the postmodern narrative time to make the novel attractive and fascinating. In the same time, Amis depicted a conversation between the writer and the death, the death of characters and of love, which is totally a game of death.

All in all, *London Fields* is a postmodern novel that is full of postmodernism writing techniques. We all know that we are now living in the postindustrial society, and the literary trend is postmodernism. Since we are living in such kind of society, we had better use the postmodernism view to judge the postmodern works. Only by doing so

can we have a better understanding of the postmodern works.

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攻读硕士学位期间所发表的学术论文

1. 《威尼斯商人》的情节分析。海外英语，2012年9月，214页

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An Interpretation of *London Fields* from the Perspective of Postmodernism

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