The Hero's Strange Sense of Time in Martin Amis's *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984)

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Précis

This paper focuses on why the hero of Martin Amis's *Money*, John Self, manifests an unusual sense of the passage time. There are two reasons behind this: an empirical factor and a factor related to the hero's act of narration. Amis's text mediates a sense of radical change, change that is viewed most powerfully in New York during the 1980s, from the British perspective of Self, through which Amis's attitude to this change emerges as negative. What also emerges in Amis's text is the victory of narrative over narrator. Self, as the narrator of his suicide note, is trapped by the narrative; in narrating, he evinces no personal autonomy. There is a conflict between narrative and narrator, and the narrative wins, thus articulating its autonomy.

With respect to the empirical factor, Self's sense of the passage of time is altered by the changes taking place in contemporary society, and this is related, in turn, to the lack of appropriate motivation that Self feels for his conduct. With the exception of money, a spring for action that is only vaguely recognized by Self, Self manifests no sense of purpose behind what he does. In this context, Self looks up at the bright, clear sky above New York, seeking to obtain consent from God for his actions. At times, he seems to be convinced that his actions are an expression of God's intent; at other times his skepticism with respect to his way of life appears strong. When feeling confident, Self appears satisfied with finding no other grounds for his acts than the acts themselves. In *A Grammar of Motives,* Kenneth Burke makes an argument with respect to certain forms of human action that pertains to Self's understanding of his motives. Burke bases his argument on the idea of pantheism, according to which God's intentions are equal to those of his created creatures, and he uses the act of Creation to support this claim. Self's sense of rapid time passage can be understood within the context of

this argument. Some of his acts do not appear to be reflected upon until after the action has been completed. Thus, regarding the act after the fact, a sense of time having passed instantaneously will come to the fore, given that there has been no experience of a time gap between premeditation of an action and realization.

This constitutes the basis of the analysis of the protagonist's unusual sense of time perception from an empirical viewpoint in relation to Self. As noted above, this paper also suggests that Self's self-same narrative mediates his position in relation to time perception, as created by the act of narration. Given that his narrative controls what he has to say, or to be more exact, is what he has to say, it is natural that he should feel time pass by quickly, with no sense of his autonomy, even if the act of narration belongs to him. Under such primacy of the narrative over the narrator with respect to the former's construction, Self's consciousness emerges as disembodied, separated from the narrative, while Self has been identified with the narrative. It is important to note here, though, that consciousness of Self is constituted in its representation in the narrative, which is nothing but the remaining trace of Self. Consequently, although Self's intimate address to the person who reads his note is apparent here and there in the suicide note, the overpowering narrative voice belongs to the implied author. In this respect, the problem concerning the identity of Self, i.e., whether it is invaded by Martin Amis, comes to nothing, because the voice belongs to the text. Through this investigation, this paper concludes that Amis's text counters the idea that narrative is at our disposal, even if, in the postmodern age, it has been freed from that which was supposed to exist beyond it.

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Introduction

No matter how a narration unfolds, the events of that narration appear ordered in a certain way. This structuring is called plot. This idea of plot suggests that unseen forces are shaping the narrative. In this context, the role of the narrator is marginalized; he or she appears to be simply passing on the narrative, or relating something that does not belong to them. In addition, the fictional characters of the narrative in this situation may also seem to lack autonomy. In this connection, William H. Gass has commented on the destiny of the fictional character thus: "The star-crossed lovers in books and plays are doomed, not because in the real world they would be, but because, far more simply, they are star-crossed."[1] Historically, however, in order to authentically render the power of the plot, the sacred realm of God had to be invoked, thereby keeping "the primary cause" unknown.[2] It was in opposition to this vision that the formalists maintained the possibility of looking at traditional plots, understood as identical to the story,[3] in a different way, such that the narrator took charge of the plot and separated it from the story.[4] Subsequently, postmodernists proposed the invalidation of any kind of sacred realm on the basis that nothing outside the narrative could be admitted. However, despite the positions of these critical movements, narrative has come to be seen as not subject to the narrator; it has come to be understood as autonomous.

In several postmodern British novels, the first-person narrator's struggle with the autonomy of the narrative is part of the narrator's aim of achieving autonomy.[5] It is important to note here, though, that this struggle emerges as a process, one that assumes a temporality consisting of different moments of time, whereas the narrative, as autonomous, appears to exist as if unaffected by any temporal variables. Naturally, these two ideas—the idea of process and the concept of ti

melessness—conflict. The narrative assumes its ostensible position only in relation to the narrator, who appears to move in the same time frame as the reader. In fact, the narrator operates in the present only hypothetically in relation to the reader, given that, as Robert Champigny has noted, the reader is "led to mistake the arbitrary present of the fictional character for the historical present of the reader."[6] Here, if we include the narrator in the same category as the fictional characters, this comment could suggest that the narrator belongs to the sphere of the narrative, with no relation to the process of struggle that the narrator appears to convey to the reader.

Generally, timelessness, as a condition of the narrative, tends to be invisible. It may be the case that a sense of temporality, a sense that the reading of the narrative assumes, becomes so dominant in the reader's mind that the reader ceases to care about the genuine narrative condition. One way to bring this covert condition to the fore would be to show that the process the reader enjoys in this respect is actually illusory. Since the reader cannot participate in the plot-development, he or she would have to focus on the narrator, as part of going through this process of disillusionment. A possible scenario for this kind of plot, then, is as follows: in the above-mentioned struggle between narrative and narrator, the latter loses the battle after an illusory victory gained through the achievement of an apparent autonomy. Indeed, this type of scenario is logically justifiable, in that the narrator's autonomy, even though it looks like it has been won, cannot be grasped as long as he or she stays in the narrative; that is, if the so-called winner (the narrator) wants to confirm his or her autonomy, he or she would have to make reference to the representation of their own autonomy, which is nothing more than the narrative that they seem to have been relating. However, the narrative, at best, is the trace of what might have been operating during the narrator's narrational act, and so it cannot function as evidence of the existence of the narrator's autonomy. If we take this into account, the narrative emerges victorious to claim its autonomy, while the disillusioned narrator has to leave the realm of the narrative, and end up somewhere beyond the margins of the narrative.

Martin Amis (1949-), a British novelist, is very conscious of problems of time, and has tackled this issue in various ways in his novels, including *Other*

People: A Mystery Story (1981), and *The Time's Arrow* (1991).[7] With regard to the position elaborated above, i.e., that timelessness constitutes a condition of the narrative, *Money* (1984) and *London Fields* (1989) are of particular interest. A brief look at *London Fields* illustrates the position explained above, i.e., the dominance of the narrative over the narrator. It is a novel that often makes the reader realize that their sense of the present, as corresponding to a certain point in the narrative they are reading, is illusory. During one summer, an American fiction-writer named Samson Young swaps apartments with a British writer called Mark Aspery, who is actually much more popular as a writer than Young. Aspery had placed an advertisement for this exchange of rooms in a literary magazine and Young had answered it. Having been in a state of writer's block for a long time, Young is hoping that he will be able to write a new work in this new environment. It happens that Young finds a diary near his apartment, written by a woman named Nicola Six, who lives quite close to his temporary foreign abode. He becomes acquainted with her in the process of attempting to return the diary, although she declines his offer to return it; he has the opportunity, therefore, to read it while it is in his possession. With this diary and Nicola at hand, Young decides to borrow her life as the material for his work.

In the diary, Nicola has written of an episode in her childhood in which she reveals that she has a talent for foreseeing "what happens next", a talent she has occasionally made use of; according to the diary, she still has this talent and knows that she is doomed to be murdered, although information as to who the murderer will be is not available to her. Young takes it upon himself to decide who the murderer will be: he assigns the murderer's role to a man named Keith, a man Young thinks is capable of murder, given that Keith had transported Young from Heathrow Airport to Aspery's apartment in London and had cheated him. Furthermore, Young picks on another man called Guy as a competitor with Keith for Nicola's love. This idea of rivalry for the woman's love comes to Young after he has witnessed a scene in which these two men meet Nicola for the first time in a pub called The Black Cross, and both seemed to become infatuated with her. From that time on, Young seems to transcribe Nicola's life, and other characters' lives; he does this through his observation of their lives, and through his conversations with them. In order to minimize the discrepancy

between his scenario and what is really happening, Young keeps regular contact with the individuals concerned, and asks them to behave in a certain way, while he goes often to the places where the characters may be found. However, his ambition is not simply to create his own work of art; he wants to set Nicola free from a state of being gripped by a half-known destiny, and to help her to reach a state in which she can see her future life more clearly. As Young has decided that Keith will be the culprit, the story should develop to the point of actually putting Keith in the scene in which he murders Nicola. Thus, Young's writing, with the cooperation of Nicola, advances in the creative battlefield against a force that is not completely recognizable on the part of the agents involved, but which is apparently latent in the development of things, as long as Nicola's foreknowledge confirms it; however, he is not bold enough to go so far as to cancel the murder of Nicola.

Nicola, who seems to have been trapped by her unwelcome talent of foreseeing what will happen next, is given advice by Young: "'Call it off, Nicola,' I said (I felt I had to say it some time.). 'So far, there's absolutely nothing inevitable about what you've entrained. Forget it. Do something else. Live'" (118). This advice, though, sounds hypocritical, given that it is Young himself who often decides how she will act; it will emerge later that he only claims, superficially, to be helping her. On the one hand, Young cannot allow Nicola to have her own autonomy to the extent that it would ruin his own; he must see to it that he is the boss. On the other hand, he cannot be the boss by his own efforts, as he lacks material for his writing, and therein lies his master-slave relation dilemma. Unless he depends on Nicola, he cannot produce his own work. Besides, he declared that he would faithfully transcribe what was happening around him, and he has no right, therefore, to create his own fiction in the main chapters. He thus occupies an ambiguous position in which he must see to it that, while his writing truly describes reality, it also shows his invention of that reality. Taking these things into consideration, his best plan would be to do one of two things: either he can order the characters to act as he wills, or he can stipulate that their behavior derives from him, after the fact.

To realize one of these plans and resolve the dilemma he has fallen into, after each divided chapter of Young's created product, Young adds something like

a sub-chapter, into which his real life, which is mainly related to his writing plan, is noted in a meta-fictional manner. This form of stark separation between the object-level and the meta-level continues for some time, and it emphasizes the difference of the regular meta-fictional form, in which the two levels co-exist on one dimension, and merge with each other. If the main chapters were not followed by sub-chapters, and existed by themselves, they might well give the reader the impression that what is narrated there actually happened as the reader took in the narrative. However, each sub-chapter seems to correct this illusion of the present by stressing that events are of Young's own making. One of the most conspicuous ways in which this occurs is in Young's mentioning, in a subchapter, that he has just finished writing the three chapters he has related thus far: "I'm so coiled up about the first three chapters, it's all I can do not to Fed-Ex—or even Thrufax—them off to Missy Harter, at Horning Ultrason. There are others I could approach. Publishers regularly inquire about my first novel" (39). Why does he have to emphasize that the main chapters are of his own making? In other words, why does he take the trouble to create meta-fiction, adopting a form that consists of main chapters and sub-chapters? As implied above, he does this because he cannot claim his autonomous creativity in the main chapters alone, despite wanting to show that he has created his own ?uvre. All he is able to do is to indicate this nominally, from a position outside the main chapters; this is the case, even if it is thought that the process of the narrator's autonomy as an embodiment of itself is inherent in the main chapters, recognition of the narrator's autonomy has to be made somewhere outside the narrative. The sub-chapter space, then, functions as a narrative-free place for Young, albeit an imaginary one, in which he may claim his autonomy, and from which he can contemplate the finished state of his narrative and deny that the narrative has created itself. He thus keeps his declared position of being "the fly" (3).

Let us consider here the role of the narrative layout from the perspective of time. Each time a sub-chapter appears, a change in perspective from that of an omniscient narrator to that of a first-person narrator occurs. This alternation in view point forces the reader to realize that the story narrated up to that point exists timelessly; this is in contrast to Young's position, who appears to relate the narrative in the temporal world. Seemingly, in the early sub-chapters he is

confident enough in his handling of the narrative—especially in terms of its layout—to indicate that he will never let things that are happening around him overtake him. In due course, however, such superiority over the narrative is rarely seen, and it becomes possible for Young to present his material only at the same time as he comments on it. Writing *about* an event changes to the writing *of* the event and, in this situation, even the sub-chapter narrator turns out to be a sort of third-person narrator. The symptoms arising from this situation appear at the outset of the novel, where he begins to feel that "[r]eal life is coming along so fast that I can no longer delay" (3). He is pressed for time and is being pressured to deal with subsequent developments, the last of which is fixed as the date of Nicola's death by murder, set for November 5th. This sense of acceleration is keenly felt by Young, partly because the material to be included in the main chapter keeps increasing, while the amount of time remaining until Nicola's death is lessening; this is compounded by the fact that, as the narrator, he is able to note only one thing at a time in the textual space. Furthermore, Young's own death, owing to radiation exposure that he experienced in his childhood, is also drawing near, a detail that resonates with the global apocalyptic mood of the eighties, as expressed in this novel. More importantly, though, he is beginning to be involved in what is happening in the narrative, both physically and emotionally. He cannot remain the fly on the wall that he wanted to be. Under these conditions, parts of the story that should be in the main chapters begin to overflow into the sub-chapters, breaching the border between the two realms of the narrative. With almost no clear borderline existing between the two, the entire novel becomes one entity, making the narrator, Young, one of the characters. He is now no longer immune to the plot, a plot that he originally claimed to have been of his own making. Young deplores the situation thus: "And you know what the worst thing about everything is? About you. About the whole story. About the world. About death. This: it's *really happening*" (436). There is no longer any confidence left on his part with regard to narrative manipulation. The cancellation of the imaginary flow of time in the main chapter can no longer be implemented, owing to the disappearance of the space in which to do so, at least until after such space reappears, posited as after the end of the novel.

Clearly, the fact that Young proves to be the murderer mediates his

metamorphosis from narrator to the narrated. Yet, there may be another reason behind his desperate attempt to be in the picture. Given that Young's murder of Nicola leads to his suicide, it may be plausible to think that this ferocious act functions to provide Young with the rationale for his exit from the narrative to somewhere extra-linguistic, where he can claim his autonomy in relation to the narrative he has related, just as he did while the meta-position was clearly outlined in the sub-chapters. The murder of Nicola may be seen as beneficial to him because, owing to the success of the act itself, he can convince himself that he has hit back at Nicola, who was about to reverse Young's original plot by changing the murderer from Keith to Guy.

The reader, on the other hand, who is assumed to have been enjoying the process of the narrated world coming into being, will experience the negation of this process as they read his will, at a point at which only the text of his will remains. It may be said that what Young as the narrator had been bringing to the fore in the subchapters, i.e., revealing the narrative condition of timelessness, culminates with his confessional narrative in his will at the very end of the novel. The reader, reflecting back on the whole story, should feel disinclined at this point to believe in any process existing in the narrative. It is of no concern to the reader to ask whether Young has succeeded in gaining autonomy; all the reader can be sure of is that the narrative exists by itself and, therefore, that the characters, including the narrator himself, exhibit only a kind of zombie status when looked at from the temporal perspective of the reader.

With the basic theme carrying across, *Money* is set at the time in which the novel was actually written, 1981. What emerges in the text is that, at this time, British society appears to be following American society, and has changed to become a culture in which people are forced to live in an endless pursuit of money. The hero named John Self shows two different reactions towards this change. On the one hand, Self feels comfortable, engrossed both in earning and spending money, while vaguely expecting to become yet more affluent. He simply leaves himself to the tidal wave of the times, given that the new age seems to encourage him to live that way, giving him no cause for compunction. On the other hand, he becomes skeptical at times about this new trend because people

seem greedier and at risk of losing their common sense. Whichever stance Self takes, he evinces a strange sense of rapid time passage: "Sometimes I feel that life is passing me by, not slowly either, but with ropes of steam and spark-spattered wheels and a hoarse roar of power or terror" (112).[8] As Self announces, he is of the '60s; he emphasizes that he has not felt such a sense of speed before, and that this rapidity seems to constitute a new phenomenon arising from the money race taking place in the 1980s global financial boom.[9]

These impressions that Self gives, with respect to his new sense of the passage of time, can be read as a sociological critique of the period. His negative attitude regarding this money-ruled society, with its resultant speed-up of life, mediates Amis's revolt against British society. Amis himself puts it like this: "I think money is the central deformity in life... it's one of the evils that has cheerfully survived identification as an evil.... It's a fiction, an addiction, and a tacit conspiracy that we have all agreed to go along with."[10] However, to look at the hero's temporal sense only from this perspective seems inadequate, because Self's impressions can also be comprehended as self-referential comments on his narrational act. That is, in addition to recalling his accelerated life in the suicide note by which Self's narrative is presented, Self seems to be conveying the idea that his autonomy is being absorbed into the narrative that he is relating, as if the autonomous narrative does not allow him to have such a quality. It seems that Self's realization of this transition from the so-called durational world of the narration to the timeless world of the narrative is producing his unusual time perception.

Obviously, the form of a suicide note, the form that his narrative takes, contributes to the temporal condensation of the narrational act. The note is supposed to have been written just after he has taken an overdose of sleeping pills, and while he is bracing for his death; it even seems appropriate to think that what occurred to Self was automatically transcribed onto the note.[11] However, this is just one of the features creating a sense of time that has been speeded up, as this study will show.

The first goal of this paper is to show that there are two reasons behind the hero's sense of the rapid passage of time: an empirical factor and a factor related to the hero's act of narration. Secondly, this paper is focused on what transpires

with repect to the hero in the process of the narration. Someone who signs himself M.A. in the introduction of the novel puts it like this: "*This is a suicide note. By the time you lay it aside (and you should always read these things slowly, on the lookout for clues or giveaways), John Self will no longer exist.*" At what point, then, did Self disappear from the suicide note? As his suicide attempt ends in failure, this remark by M.A. regarding Self's absence signifies something other than Self's literal death. Also, the voice of the narrator of the suicide note sometimes does not sound like Self's, as he admits it. The second goal of this paper is concerned, then, with the issue of who narrates the suicide note.

I. Motivation for The Hero's Conduct

John Self belongs to a new "underclass,"[12] a group that has gained power in British society by making personal fortunes. He has become rich by making TV commercials and writing pornographic scripts. For the purpose of making a feature film in the United States, he visits New York to discuss plans for the film with an American co-producer named Fielding Goodney, as well as with a number of actors and actresses. The American film stars find some scenes not suited to their image, and demand revisions to the script. The negotiations, therefore, do not run smoothly, and this enables Self to repeat his visit, while the script is being revised by other professional writers, including the Martin Amis character.

In New York, Self has nothing particular to do except spend time doing business with the co-producer and film stars. He tries to kill his free time, sometimes with Goodney; most of the time, though, he is alone, wandering around town in search of women and alcohol, and squandering money in a flamboyant way. Even in his hotel room, he continues to drink heavily, often indulging in masturbation. While loitering about New York, he records the American city landscape, noting how anxious people are about money, more so than in London. For example, as he walks down Broadway, Self sees a man screaming on the street, complaining about money that he feels should be his:

As he shadowboxed he loosely babbled of fraud and betrayal, redundancy,

> eviction. 'It's my money and I want it!' he said. 'I want my money and I want it now!' The city is full of these guys, these guys and dolls who bawl and holler and weep about bad luck all the hours there are. (6)

This scene itself is not extraordinary; it could occur anywhere, at anytime. What is important, though, is that this small scene is recorded in Self's memory of his first visit to New York. There is little doubt that his astonishment comes through in this record.

However, the shock that Self feels soon leaves him, given that the society in which he is operating as a director is so dominated by money. It should be noted, of course, that he enjoys the benefits of this culture of money. Because he is situated in a context in which the acquisition of money is the driving force behind people's behavior, he can satisfy his ego by spending money. Certainly, this money-oriented situation, in a foreign city, functions to boost his mood of festivity. However, such a bright mood could indicate a state of repression in Self. At 35 years of age, he is confronted with a turning point in his life. He is halfway through his life, at the stage when he is required, socially, to move from being a youth to being an adult, and to decide on his future course. Self resists this pressure, by living in the present in a rather desperate way; this trajectory is expressed in his advice to the reader of his suicide note: "Take my advice and stick to the present. It's the real stuff, the only stuff, it's all there is, the present, the panting present" (208). In contrast, his friends, who are of much the same age, comply with social custom to a certain extent. His girlfriend, Selina, is trying to behave in a grown-up way by forsaking her nonchalant way of life. Knowing that she is no longer young, Selina urges Self to marry her, while also asking for financial help to run a boutique with her friend. For Selina, establishing a household and recognizing the value of money do not conflict. Small wonder, then, that she is blind to the problem that is afflicting Self, a problem that, owing to his desperate attempts to live only in the present, entails that his acts have no definite future goals; although Self tries to search for a purpose behind his actions, he cannot find an appropriate motive other than that of money. Michael Rohmer points to a characteristic of the age in which God is dead, a characteristic that is close to Self's current attitude to his life:

> Since our will and action appear irrelevant, we have lost confidence in the future, and see no point in sacrificing present gratification for future gain. Consciously, we may deny that we are beholden to circumstance but unconsciously we are close to the ancient conviction that "You are what each day makes you."[13]

We could perhaps better use Rohmer's claim for the explanation of Self's mental attitude if we change the order of the first sentence thus: because Self sees no point in sacrificing the present for the future, his will and action have begun to appear irrelevant. Indeed, he is afraid of the future, the sense of which he labels as "a feeling of ulteriority" (118), and he remonstrates with himself thus: "Yes, it is time I settled down, grew up. There's no choice really: not settling down and not growing up are killing me. I've got to quit it, being young before it's too late" (173).

Indeed, the people he encounters, who function as a mirror for him, convey a sense of absurdity to him. In Self's eyes, people have quit deliberating on their behavior and just do whatever they do, as if their behavior were motivated by itself. For instance, in the flophouse into which he has brought a young call girl, he watches her commence her work, apparently with no anxiety about what she is doing. On the spur of the moment, he scolds and preaches to the girl, who is pregnant, but in vain; instead, what he ends up doing is identifying himself with the girl:

> She was like me, myself. She knew she shouldn't do it, she knew she shouldn't go on doing it. But she went on doing it anyway. Me, I couldn't even blame money. What is this state, seeing the difference between good and bad and choosing bad-or consenting to bad, okaying bad?
>
> Nothing happened. I gave her a further ten for carfare. She went off to find more men and money. (26)

He cannot extract any information as to why the girl is engaged in such a business. Perhaps, there are reasons for her actions, such as earning money for raising the child about to be born. However, any intimate communication is

blocked, so that, as far as what he sees is concerned, Self thinks that the girl does what she does simply for the sake of money; if the money motivation is discounted, the girl may be said to be doing what she does for the act's sake. It is small wonder, then, that Self finds himself like this girl. They both live only in the present, and have only a tautological explanation for their conduct, a state of affairs in which the motivation of act A is equal to the description of act A.

Interestingly enough, Self's anxiety, derived from not being able to find a proper motivational explanation for his conduct, leads him to look up to the sky for an answer. In the next passage, which describes him riding in a cab in Manhattan, what he thinks he confirms from "the tall agencies" and the sky above is consent for his conduct from God, whom he thinks exists, somewhere, up in the sky:

> There is a sense, as you sit in your cab and tunnel through the grooves and traps, there is a shaper sense (there must be) of the smallness of human c oncerns—in New York, when you always feel the height and weight of the tall agencies. Control, purpose, meaning, they're all up there. They're not down here. God has taken columned New York between the knuckles of his right hand—and tugged. That must make the ground feel lower. I am in the cab, going somewhere, directing things with money. I have more say than the people I look out on, nomads, tide-people. They have no say. (130)

Above the skyscrapers in New York, the sky is "ocean brightness" (19). No blockage in the view towards the apex of the sky further encourages him to think that God's intentions for humans are somehow naturally played out through human actions.

Compared to the New York sky, the sky in London is always unclear, as Self says:

> With a flinch I looked up: still no weather. Sometimes, when the sky is as grey as this—impeccably grey, a denial, really of the very concept of colour—and the stooped millions lift their heads, it's hard to tell the air from the impurities in our human eyes... (71-2)

One cannot say for certain whether God is up there, or what God intends us to do if he is up there. In London, if Self tries to seek the same kind of approval for his conduct, he finds no evidence or trace of God in the ever somber sky. The clouds are blocking what might possibly be behind them. Interestingly enough, scenes in New York, not those in London, are what he mentions in his suicide note when he reports on the rapid passage of his life. It seems possible to think that his irregular sense of the passage of time is directly related to his way of interpreting his acts in New York, that is, he sees his acts as, possibly, equal to God's intentions. In London, the possibility of a gap between his acts and God's intentions can be imagined; it seems as if God intends some other kind of behavior, especially given the changing times. Feeling anxious that his current acts might have deviated from what they should be, Self often claims that there should be some standard on which to base his behavior. At such moments, he must feel a sense of future, in that time would be required in order for him to reach an ideal state, a state that is not at present clear.

At this point a look at motivational theory seems appropriate in order to corroborate the claims made above. Kenneth Burke's, *A Grammar of Motives*, reveals the covert connection between "Act" and "Scene" and, in doing so, sheds new light on our behavior in terms of motivation. Burke argues thus: "[T]here is implicit in the quality of a scene the quality of the action that is to take place within it."[14] In the course of his theorizing, he takes as a prototype of human behavior, "the Creation", and wonders if we could suppose the scene in which God created the world. It would be logically wrong to assume that there was already a world at the point at which God tried to make it but, on the other hand, it would be unconceivable that God made the world without any scene involved.

According to Burke's explanation, there have been two schools of thought, since the medieval era, about the creation of the world. One position is to posit God as an agent, and "the creature is set over against him".[15] The other position is what we call pantheism, in which God positions Himself and the creature in the same rank. In the former stance, God had a certain intention initially and, as a result of this intention, the world was created. Temporally, the intention

precedes the creation. In the second scenario, God's intention is equal to this world. There is no time gap between God having an intention and the world being created; no temporal priority with respect to God's intention in relation to the creation of the world exists. As the first theory includes the risk that God's free will, which is causa sui in nature, might be constrained by something other than itself, Burke, avoiding this risk, seems to drift toward the second theory concerning the Creation of the world.

As mentioned above, the reason why Burke takes up the Creation is not to participate in the argument over this issue, but to find out whether his analysis of the Creation might yield a prototypical conduct, or the purest form of action. Burke applies the fruits of his analysis of the Creation to our experiential world, and proposes that we have a new type of behavior: "[We] are admonished to expect occasions when, in seeking for the motives of an act, the thinker will in effect locate the motive under the head of Act itself."[16] Now, it turns out that Self's conduct in New York, as it is interpreted by him, belongs to this type of behavior.

Applying Burke's insights, it may be possible to explain what causes the hero to have such a strange sense of time. It is routinely taken for granted that some of our actions proceed in the following manner: we decide on what we will do, and then we act. In such a scenario, there is a certain time gap between our determination and its subsequent realization. We wait for the future in which our determination is to be realized. By contrast, in a situation in which actions are motivated by themselves, the agent will probably feel a sense of speed, because the gap that should exist between determination and realization does not exist. To be more exact, the agent will lack even a sense of speed unless they become conscious of their act. At such a moment of reflection, it would appear that the act had been completed, without specific awareness of it having been so at the time of the action.[17]

As if to give a concrete example of this mechanism, Self reports in the suicide note on the evening he spent in New York. On that day, Self arrived in New York from London, for the second time, and has a long day to kill. Towards the evening, after checking into his usual hotel, he starts to worry about how to kill time. He is alone and considers six ways to spend his time, before deciding

on one option, while uttering a very odd remark:

> Now the way I figured it I had six realistic options. I could sack out right away, with some scotch and a few Serafim. I could go back to the Happy Isles and see what little Moby was up to. I could call Doris Arthur. I could catch a live sex show around the corner, in bleeding Seventh Avenue. I could go out and get drunk. I could stay in and get drunk.
>
> In the end I stayed in and got drunk. The trouble was, I did all the other things first. (111-12)

True, the options available here are not overtly money-related but, nevertheless, as this remark shows, there has been no room for choice on his part; he did not go through the process of choosing one option among several options, considering the pros and cons of all of the possibilities. Paradoxical as it might sound, it was not until multiple, temporally separate, actions had been completed that he could say that he had options for action. One possible interpretation of the last sentence of the above quote is, then, that he performed each of these other acts without noticing that he was performing it. In the end, after making the decision to stay in and get drunk, it dawned on him how time had unknowingly escaped him; the last sentence in the quote is followed by his explicit remark that his life is passing by swiftly.

On the other hand, it may be possible to read this passage not just as Self telling us of his experience during an evening spent in New York; quite possibly, the phrase "the trouble" in the above quotation may refer to the trouble caused by his narrational act. Self narrates in the suicide note by "identify[ying] with his earlier incarnation, renouncing all manner of cognitive privilege."[18] That is, he pretends to know nothing about what he is to face in the future, in the same manner as he was at the corresponding moments in the past. If such pretense is feasible, then it would seem possible, for instance, to narrate the process of making a decision out of multiple choices. However, the last sentence in the above quote could mean that he is suddenly disillusioned from being in a position to have such a choice; he is now forced to deny having such an opportunity. Perhaps, such disenchantment could have been triggered by the realization of the

existence of narrative autonomy. It may be, thus, that his sense of the rapid passage of time is caused by this transition from his pretended positioning in the past to the state of being aware that the narrative exists timelessly.

Likewise, there are several points in the suicide note in which he announces his sense of rapid time passage; these points might be related to his sense of the high speed at which the narration is completed, even if he refrains from clearly saying so. The next passage exemplifies such points: "[My life] is passing, yet I'm the one who is doing all the moving. I'm not the station, I'm not the stop: I'm the train. I'm the train" (112). The whole passage mediates Self's reflection on his narrational act, as the first sentence in this quote can be paraphrased as "My narrative is passing, yet I am the narrator who is doing all the narrating." This could mean that Self knows that he does the narration yet he is not in control of it. In this way, Amis seems to overlap the narrative relating Self's reflection on his experience with Self's reflection on the narrational act, which is being overwhelmed by the autonomy of the narrative.

It can be said, then, that Self's reflection is expressed by means of Self's second voice, by which I mean the voice that could be called the voice of consciousness, as opposed to the voice that simply relates his experiences. The second voice stands at a level higher than the first voice, and comments on his experiences. When Self is in New York, and is in a situation in which he has been virtually robbed of his initiative for action, it is natural that he should feel left out of the whole operation, disembodied somewhat. In addition, it is to be expected that his narrational act leaves him feeling disembodied if the narrative he relates is autonomous. In connection with the emergence of such consciousness, Michael Rohmer points to the phenomenon that occurs to a narrator during narrational activity:

> The storyteller often starts out wholly identified with his story.... Most of us trust the singer because he *is*-or was-the song, and the storyteller because he has lived the story. Yet in the course of telling it, both he and we who listen become freer, or more detached. Perhaps only those who must live their story *without* knowing or telling it are utterly helpless."[19]

Rohmer's point here is that the story-teller, or the narrator, becomes conscious of being unconscious of the fact that he is narrating; it is as if the narrative takes over the narration, and leaves the narrator behind.

As a matter of fact, Self does not like being in this state of disembodiment, separated from what he has related. This dissatisfaction comes through in one particular scene when he is on the airplane that takes him from New York to London. In this place, where he is physically lifted out of the world, and where there are no time coordinates, he contemplates himself as distinct from the rest of humanity, whose only concern is with money; to emphasize this difference, he refers to the people on earth as "the Earthlings." Making the claim that "human beings simply [aren't] meant to fly around like this" (264), Self seems to show his dissatisfaction not only with the worship of money, but also with his marginalized position in relation to the narrative. This signifies that Self wants to participate with other people who are not engrossed in earning money, and that he wants to continue being in the narrative in such a way that he can command it. His desire is expressed by his occasional announcements of his desperate need for human touch.

Rather ironically, however, this estrangement creates an imminent relationship between the narrator and the reader of the suicide note; Self narrates openly what should have been at the deepest level of his heart. He labels it "private culture":

> Look at my life. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking: But it's terrific! It's great! You're thinking: Some guys have all the luck! Well, I suppose it must look quite cool, what with the aeroplane tickets and the restaurants, the cabs, the filmstars.... But my life is also my private culture— that's what I'm showing you, after all, that's what I'm letting you into, my private culture. And I mean *look* at my private culture. Look at the state of it. It really isn't very nice in here. (123)

If that estrangement had not taken place, he would not have had the opportunity to be so direct in addressing the reader of this suicide note. However, what I want to suggest is that this intimate form of address on the part of Self to the reader constitutes an implicit declaration that he has been robbed of possession of

his narrative. This assumption, that his form of address articulates his exclusion from the role of narrator, is based on this revelation of his inner self, which implies, in turn, that he has lost his autonomous choice as to what should be conveyed, except for his inner life; by disclosing his private realm, a revelation he can decide upon, he sounds as if he is making a final resistance to the invasion by the autonomous narrative. The next section will focus on this issue and attempt to identify the narrator of the suicide note.

II. Who Is the Narrator of the Suicide Note?

Previous studies on *Money* have focused on the author-in-the-text problem. The Amis character is a writer who lives in London, with apparently the same background as Amis himself. As a result, the identity of Self is problematized. Laura L. Doan claims that the Amis writer creates the Amis character so that the reader will not confuse the Amis character with Self, who comes across as so obnoxious.[20] On the other hand, another group of critics recognize that Self mediates the Amis writer because the voice of the Amis writer has invaded that of Self, occasionally displaying Amis's high intelligence in the words of the snobbish unintellectual Self, thereby creating a discrepancy.[21] Also, Self alludes to a topic that Amis has written about elsewhere, which is, the topic of the childless married couple.[22] Admittedly, Self mediates at least some aspects of the Amis writer, given that he is generally viewed through his previous publications. Even so, I want to argue that this issue of Self's identity, whether it reflects the creator or not, does not amount to much if we pay attention to what transpires with respect to Self in the process of the narration.

As the previous section has noted, Self is trapped not only by the new way of the world, but also by discontent with his film script on the part of the actors and the actresses. It seems plausible to think that the Amis character is brought in to rescue him from confusion. The Amis character is brought in to rescue him from confusion. The presence of the Amis character in London, as a writer who appears at a relatively early point in the novel and looks rather indifferent to money, suggests the possibility of relativizing Self's life which eludes his control, indicating, therefore, that this life might have another version. This turns out to be the case, at least partly, in the latter half of the novel, when the Amis

character is engaged in revising the film script, based on Self's past life. With the Amis character's cooperation, Self expects to have a revised version of the film script that everyone concerned with the project will be pleased with. Now Self is about to experience the autonomous alteration of the fixed contents of the script narrative, by having the Amis character do it for him. However, at this point Self is plunged into a financial tailspin, set up by Fielding and the Amis character. Self's dream of having autonomy in his script as well as in his life proves completely illusory when the Amis character discloses that he has set him up. Thus, not only has Self's original script not been improved, but also his life has again evaded him. In fact, retrospectively speaking, their relationship has not been good from the start. First, Self announces, early on, that he is suspicious of the Amis character: "He gives me the creeps," (71) he says, as if Self knows the power of the latter. Furthermore, even in the middle of the novel, he is conscious of the possibility that the Amis character could attack his autonomy. As James Diedrick has pointed out, there is a feverish quality to their dialogue: 'By interrupting the Amis character's would-be monologue, Self asserts his autonomy, his refusal to be a mere authorial "gimmick."'[23] Their conflict eventually leads to Self's attempt to commit suicide. Interestingly, the Amis character also disappears soon after the disclosure, while playing chess with Self; as Self reports: "When I awoke, Martin was still in the room, and still talking. When I awoke, Martin Amis was gone and there was no sound anywhere." (379) The silence is remarkable, in that Self's visit to New York started with the din and bustle of the big city. The disappearance of the Amis character might reflect his desire to objectify the acquired autonomy; if so, he has to leave the narrative he relates, because one can never enjoy the state of being autonomous while being autonomous. In this way, the narrative proves unimpaired at the end, while becoming the object of contemplation.

This interpretation with respect to the role of the Amis character, however, gives the impression that the struggle on the part of the characters against the narrative continues until the end; however, this ignores the frame of the suicide note, recognizing Self as a character only. When we remember the form of the suicide note and Self's role as narrator, it turns out that such a process is illusory from the onset. Perhaps, the truth of the matter is that at each point of the

narrative, the narrational voice, in this case, the voice of John Self, is regulated by the narrative, no matter how alive his voice may sound in the process of narration; an illusory vivacity is produced only by the reader. In fact, Self has been expressing this indirectly, sometimes by referring to his strange sense of the passage of time, and sometimes by his intimate address to the reader of the note. From this viewpoint, then, the answer to the question of who the narrator of the suicide note is should be "the implied author", who may be defined as follows: "[W]hile the flesh-and-blood author is subject to the vicissitudes of real life, the implied author of a particular work is conceived of as a stable entity, ideally consistent with itself within the work."[24] The implied author is thus a hypothetical entity, who is neither equal to the real writer nor to the narrator of the story; the implied author is exempt from temporal variables because what he/she presents is self-determined. Now that it is clear that the narrator of the suicide note is this implied author, we understand that the major issue of Self's identity will come to nothing.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the hero's strange sense of the passage of time, and the significance of this sense. On the one hand, it reflects his empirical impression, as a character, that his life has been accelerated, but, on the other, it may also be the trace of Self as the narrator who is turned into the narrative, as the narrative emerges. In the latter case, the cause of Self's sense of rapid time passage is his recognition of the generic condition of the narrative, i.e., timelessness.

If such recognition is also required of us in the formation of a narrative of our past experience, then, obviously, we will suffer from the gap that will be produced between our "real" experiences and their representation through the narrative. While arguing that the author presents the narrative as a whole product, Gary Saul Morson points to the loss of "eventness" as a possible deformation of such production:

> [T]he author exists in a different kind of time, one that makes the whole of the character's life subject to contemplation as it could never be in the character's own time. Once there is such a whole, then each moment of my

> life figures in advance in an already written story; once there is a "story-line weight," my actions lose their "eventness."[25]

Seemingly, we have a sense of "eventness," a sense of something unexpectedly happening to us, attached to the experience that we have. Therefore, it might be a pity not to be able to preserve in the narrative such an experiential component, especially since all we have available, in the postmodern condition, is what seems to be narrative, or text. As this paper has shown, however, *Money* articulates the idea that such grief is futile, in that the existence of "eventness", as Morson has pointed out, is an illusion, because the narrative exists *a priori*, and thus resists any intervention on our parts.

Notes

*This paper is a revised and extended version of the paper I read at the 76th Conference of the English Literary Society of Japan held at Osaka Univeristy on 25 May 2004.

[1] Gass 20.

[2] With regard to the "primary cause," Michael Rohmer states: "[T]hough [most narratives] may unfold in an *enchaînement* of social, economic, and psychological links that are clear and plausible, the *primary* cause—the origin of the plot—remains beyond our understanding. Traditional stories tell us *what* happens and how, but not, finally, *why*." Rohmer 43.

[3] Rohmer refers to the identity of plot in relation to the story in the traditional narrative. See Rohmer 11.

[4] Defining the word "motif" as "irreducible, the smallest particles of thematic material," Boris Tomashevsky, one of the Russian Formalists, explains the distinction between "the story" and "the plot" thus: "Mutually related motifs form thematic bonds of the work. From this point of view, the story is the aggregate of motifs in their logical, causal-chronological order; the plot is the aggregate of those same motifs but having the relevance and the order which they had in the original work.... A plot is wholly an artistic creation." Tomashevsky 67-8.

[5] One such example is Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* (1995). Although the hero, Ryder, struggles to make something of a fantasy world with unstable time and space coordinates, in the end he is overwhelmed by the emergence of reality.

[6] Champigny 71. Champigny includes the idea of the fictional narrator in that of the fictional character here.

[7] As to the theme of time identified in *Other People*, Brian Finney has noted that this novel is about a timeless present. See Finney 9.

[8] Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985). All quotations from the novel that appear in this study are from this edition.

[9] In this connection, many scholars mention the problem of time contraction that is characteristic of this phenomenon. Steven Conner suggests that "the political value of aesthetic-cultural practice may lie ... in its very resistance to the installation of the future in the present." See Connor 234.

[10] Haffenden 13-4. This portion of the interview is used in Diedrick 74.

[11] Dorit Cohn states that the origin of the text in which the autonomous monologue is presented tends to be neglected due to the very nature of the genre. Cohn 175.

[12] The phrase, a new "underclass" is used in Bradbury's general guide to 1980's British society. See Bradbury 444.

[13] Rohmer 358.

[14] Burke 6-7.

[15] Burke 66. This is the quote from William James by Burke.

[16] Burke 69.

[17] Referring to G. E. M. Anscombe's argument developed in her *Intention*, Osamu Ueno states that it is often by our retroactive awareness that our intentions are revealed. See Ueno 90.

[18] Cohn 155.

[19] Rohmer 103.

[20] See Doan 73.

[21] See, for instance, Diedrick 77; Dern 90-1.

[22] In writing on this topic, Amis refers to Iris Murdoch and John Bayley. See Amis, On *Modern British Fiction* 265-69. Amis's essay was originally published in *Encounter* in June, 1961.

[23] Diedrick 96-7.

[24] Rimmon-Kenan 87.

[25] Morson 90.

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