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Martin Amis'in *Night Train* Adlı Romanı'nda Kültürel Anlaşılabilirlik ve Kişisel Performans

Özet: İngiliz Romancı Kingsley Amis'in oğlu Martin Amis, Çağdaş İngiliz Romanı'nın en çok tanınan temsilcilerindendir ve *Time* dergisinin "All-TIME 100 Novels" (Tüm Zamanların En İyi 100 Romanı)" ve *The Guardian* gazetesinin "The 100 Best Novels Written in English" (İngilizce Yazılmış En İyi 100 Roman)" ile "The 100 Greatest Novels of All Time" (Tüm Zamanların En İyi 100 Romanı)" listelerine girmeyi başaran *Money* adlı romanı gibi bir çok önemli eseri Çağdaş İngiliz Edebiyatı'na kazandırmıştır. Martin Amis'in 1997 yılında yazdığı roman *Night Train* Amis'in bu roman öncesinde yazmış olduğu eserlerle karşılaştırıldığında onlardan tarz ve anlatım olarak çok farklıdır. Eserdeki kahramanın karakterize ediliş şekli bu eseri ilginç kılan en önemli özelliklerdendir. Roman, her ne kadar bir davanın peşinde bir detektifi anlatsa da bu kadın detektifin eserde resmedilişi, detektif romanı türünün alışılagelmiş yazın tarzlarıyla karşılaştırıldığında bu türden oldukça farklıdır. Ayrıca, geleneksel bir şekilde maskülen bir çevre olarak karakterize edilmiş emniyet teşkilatında kadın bir detektif olarak var olma mücadelesi veren ana karakter hem içinde yaşadığı erkek egemen toplumun hem de çalıştığı bu çevrenin baskıları altındadır. Bu bağlamda, çalışmanın amacı, Michel Foucault ve Judith Butler'ın özellikle bireylerin sınıflandırılması, katmanlandırılması ve hiyerarşik bir ilişki yapısı oluşturularak kadınların boyun eğdirilmesi üzerine olan teorilerinden de faydalanarak *Night Train*'deki ana kahraman karakterinin irdelenmesini ve erkek egemen toplumlarda baskıcı kültürel beklentilere bu kahraman tarafından nasıl karşı konulduğunu incelemektir.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Martin Amis, Night Train, Cinsiyet Performansı, Kültürel Anlaşılabilirlik

Cultural Intelligibility and the Individual Performance in Martin Amis's Night Train

Abstract: Martin Amis, the son of the well-known English novelist Kingsley Amis, is one of the most celebrated novelists of the contemporary English novel and he has written quite impressive books like *Money* which has been in the list, "All-TIME 100 Novels" by *Time*, and has been added to the lists, "The 100 Best Novels Written in English" and "The 100 Greatest Novels of All Time" of *The Guardian*. His 1997 novel, *Night Train* is quite different in style and narration compared to his previous work, yet it is a significant piece of work because of the remarkable characterization of a protagonist. Although the novel features a detective and the plot is constructed around a process of resolving a case, the portrayal of the woman detective is different from the generic conventions of the genre, the detective novel. Also, as a woman struggling to survive in a traditionally masculine environment, the police force, the protagonist of the novel has to face a great deal of oppression both because of her profession and the patriarchal environment she lives in. Hence, by drawing attention to the theories of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, particularly those about the traditional classification and stratification of individuals based on gender or sex in order to subjugate them after constructing a hierarchical relationship, the purpose of this study is to explore the characterization of the protagonist of *Night Train* to point out how the oppressive cultural expectations and traditions of patriarchal societies are challenged and also subverted in a work of fiction.
Keywords: Martin Amis, Night Train, Gender Performativity, Cultural Intelligibility.

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Introduction

Martin Amis, with his wordplays and a direct colloquial vernacular in his books, is a notorious English novelist that is often characterized by his excessive use of graphic descriptions of violence, vivid details of murder, blood, gross images as well as his sexist narrators, misogynist characters, and women with details emphasizing their femininity and sexuality. The drug, alcohol, and sex addict narratee, John Self in *Money* is the misogynist protagonist par excellence, one of the major figures in *London Fields*, Keith Talent is introduced to the reader as the murderer and a womanizer seeing all as mere pastime objects. Women in both novels, particularly, Nicola Six in *London Fields*, and also women that John Self spends time in *Money*, are all portrayed as bodies with little or no dimension and character development. As a result of the representations of woman in his novels as passive victims as opposed to active domineering masculine figures, Amis's books are often despised by feminists, and they are either grouped within "the ladlit" by feminists like Showalter or dismissed as appallingly sexist by the judges of "The Man Booker Prize", Maggie Gee and Helen McNeil.[1]

However, with the publication of *Night Train*, Amis's oeuvre has taken up a new path. Instead of male misogynist narratees, there is a woman narrating in a confessional first-person mode; instead of sexist portrayals of shallow female characters who are stereotypically passive, there is the presentation of active women who become the essential motive in the construction of the plot and whose inner struggles enrich the novel with a psychological depth; instead of the depiction of ignorant and sexually attractive "belles" who used to be in his earlier novels, there is an intelligent detective who wears her heart on her sleeve and demonstrates her reactions against the patriarchal logocentric oppressions around women explicitly; that is why Natasha Walter from *The Guardian* comments on the novel, "for the first time he [Amis] has created heroines who are defined not by their underwear and the size of their breasts, but by their work and relationships and human disappointments.[2]" As a result of the idiosyncratic portrayal of Mike Hoolihan as a woman and a detective in the novel, as the powerful yet not domineering, as a female with a masculine body and voice, yet with ambiguous sexual preferences, the novel negates intensely the ideological systematization and gender or sex based classification, and eventually, it purports to prove these criteria of

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[1] B. Finney, *Martin Amis* (New York: Routlege, 2008), 22.

[2] N. Walter, "If You Have Tears to Shed, Prepare to Shed Them - in a Martin Amis Novel," *The Guardian* Sep. 11, 1997, para. 7.

classification are both products of the patriarchal discourse that is responsible for the continuous perpetuation of the oppression based on the categorized gender/sex roles in society.

Cultural Intelligibility versus Performativity

In "The Subject and Power," Foucault focuses on how individuals are made subjects within the system of power, and in the second part of his article, he mentions "dividing practices" as a significant technique used to objectivize the subject. He notes, "[t]he subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys.'"[3] Theories about power are based on a binary opposition that argues the existence of two essential sides in a power structure. In each binary opposition, there is one group that is subjugated and thus powerless and inferior and another second group who takes advantage of the power they have via dominating the other[4]. Historically, these opposing categories are considered as essential metaphysics of presence, and they are used to situate individuals within broader circles and to associate them with certain values. In other words, the system of power, traditionally "applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects."[5] Because of such dividing practices that ideology imposes on the individual, the identity that defines the person becomes just a result of a manipulative process since individuals acquire these as a result of the ideological divisions in which they are classified. The ever-active power relations in the construction of individual identities are also responsible for the perpetuation of a process of differentiation, and as Foucault asserts, "[e]very relationship of power puts into operation differentiations which are at the same time its conditions and its results."[6] Hence, for a proper operation of power structures, the ideological discourse necessitates the categorization and systematization of individuals placing them within certain groups, roles, races, nations so as to identify all these as passive and to address, control, and manipulate them flawlessly. Moreover,

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[3] M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, 8, no. 4 (1982): 777-778.

[4] M. Foucault, 794-795.

[5] M. Foucault, 781.

[6] M. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry,* 8, no. 4 (1982): 792.

in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault claims power relations are established with the help of certain disciplinary regulations that are necessary "for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities;"[7] and the system of discipline is defined by him as "a type of power . . . comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology."[8] To recap, a process of interpellation in Althusserian sense is needed for the power relations to be established, in which a classification or a naming process is at work, in other words, an addressing to an individual takes place; and once the individual responds to this addressing by identifying herself/himself within the system or class she/he is situated, the individual becomes subjugated, and thus is ready for further categorizations, systematizations, and stratifications.

In addition to the arguments above, the systematization based on the sex and gender has been one of the most effective apparatuses that the ideology exploited in order to subjugate individuals. Foucault argues in *History of Sexuality I*,

> the notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an
> artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions,
> conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make
> use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent
> meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere: sex was thus able
> to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified.[9]

Foucault, referring sex to mean concurrently the biological sex of an individual and the physical activity of having an intercourse, claims, the modern age is obsessed with the sex, and the naming of sex and sexuality, or in his own words, "the deployment of sexuality"[10] with definitions and limitations constructed within the society allow the power to reify human bodies and manipulate them in line with its purposes. As a result of this, he suggests, "sexuality and power are coextensive,"[11] and he draws attention how intricate the relationship between sexuality and power and how efficient sexuality is as an ideological apparatus used to enhance power relations,

> [Sexuality] appears rather as an especially dense transfer point
> for relations of power: between men and women, young people

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[7] M. Foucault, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 207.

[8] M. Foucault, 206.

[9] M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 154.

[10] M. Foucault, 155.

[11] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40.

> and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable element in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality: useful for the greatest number of maneuvers and capable of serving as a point of support, as a linchpin, for the most varied strategies.[12]

As it is clearly stated above sexuality is the "linchpin" and the essential ideological discursive practice with which modern knowledge-power relationship is elaborated and as a result of the deployment of sexuality within the system, varied and multiple strategies of power become influential to subjugate the individual. In other words, Foucault claims that all sex related concepts and notions are figments that are produced collectively in society and as a result, human body is situated and systematized within broader epistemological and political discourses such as education, profession, and reproduction.

Inspired by the arguments above, as a poststructuralist feminist, Judith Butler asserts that both gender and the sex of a person are constructed concepts appeared out of repetitive performances in the culture that person lives, and as a result of this process, individuals are not only gendered, but also sexed culturally, not biologically; put simply, since the female perform those behaviours and attitudes associated traditionally with their gender tacitly, they have come to be named arbitrarily as female, so the sex does not precede gender, but gender is supplemented by sex. Therefore, for Butler, both gender and sex refer to the same thing, and they are synonymous,[13] and the latter is neither the cause of the former nor invincible against the manipulations of the former; that is why Butler remarks "[l]ived or experienced 'sex' is always already gendered."[14] To have the body of a woman would not necessarily mean for Butler to have feminine or female attributes or preferences and desires. What Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* is not only the dichotomy between man and woman are constructed socially, culturally, and historically, but the dichotomy between the concepts sex and gender, one being a biological fact and the other being formed within the society is also a social, cultural, and historical construct. For her, there is no denotative relationship between sex and gender, and as she remarks "man and masculine might just easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and

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[12] M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 103.

[13] 2006, p. 11)

[14] J. Butler, "Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex," *Yale French Studies,* no. 72 (1986), 39.

feminine a male body as easily as a female one."[15] Although sex is more a fabricated social concept exploited to exercise the power, the society has come to acknowledge it as a biological and scientific fact. As Foucault suggests, "sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures."[16] Yet, Foucault also emphasizes in *History of Sexuality I*, "[w]here there is power, there is resistance,"[17] and within the legitimization and systematization processes of the power, there are always counter forces that challenge the power and the system. The existence of the counter forces has two essential functions, and first, the system exploits these delegitimized classes, in Foucault's wording "the delinquent," in order to set its boundaries around the "proper" to leave out the "improper," and second, it enables a centrifugal force in the power to render delinquent possible, in other words, what power delegitimizes becomes subversive on its system and the ideological discursive practices exercised within the power. Based on these arguments, in this study, the characterization of the fictional detective, Mike Hoolihan in the novel, will be examined in order to claim the fact that her characterization necessitates a re-imagination of the mythical detective as a male and masculine; and the traditional understanding of the woman as feminine and female.

Butler refers to Foucault's idea that sexuality and power are coextensive as the former is produced and legitimized within the latter and the latter is guaranteed by the former; yet the legitimization process of power products through regulations, classifications and, prohibitions is also productive because there is always the possibility of producing subversive deviations and mutations and the process legitimizes these as well, by positing them outside the circle or as the other. Butler claims "the sexuality that emerges within the matrix of power relations is not a simple replication or copy of the law itself, a uniform repetition of a masculinist economy of identity."[18] She, therefore, asserts the existence of productions that "swerve from their original purposes and inadvertently mobilize possibilities of 'subjects' that do not merely exceed the bounds of cultural intelligibility, but effectively expand the boundaries of what is, in fact, culturally intelligible."[19] Although these "swerves" are outside the legitimate circles, they are still subversive on the ideological

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[15] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

[16] M. Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 155.

[17] M. Foucault, 95.

[18] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 40.

[19] J. Butler, 40.

discursive practices, and they problematize perceptions of gender identity and sexuality, thus, as Butler suggests above, the boundaries that set "cultural intelligibility" of gender identity turns in to an infinite continuum of changes, and the fictional detective Mike Hoolihan is portrayed as swerving from original purposes of the masculine detective character; and therefore, she moves out of the cultural intelligibility and as a result expands its boundaries as Butler has suggested.

The fictional detective as 'swerving from its original purposes' in *Night Train*

The novel, *Night Train* begins with the protagonist negating her affiliation to a specific gender group by underscoring her occupational identity as a police officer initially. Detective Mike Hoolihan introduces herself "I am a woman, also," and adds, "I am a police . . . Among ourselves, we would never say I am a policeman or I am a policewoman . . . We would just say I am a police."[20] The emphasis on the expression "I am a police" not only works, as Kermode notes, "to create an authoritative insider voice,"[21] but also draws attention to the awareness of the detective that she is a woman troubled with the patriarchal limits set around her gender. Bentley at this point draws attention to Mike's self-awareness and notes, she is "a character who describes herself at the opening of the novel as 'a police', a form of self-categorization that foregrounds occupation over identity categories such as gender, class, ethnicity and sexuality."[22] Pointing at the traditional dichotomy between man and woman doing the same profession, Mike implies her disillusionment with gender norms classifying her as either woman or a man. Being a police officer is reflected as a gender-free profession, and in line with this argument, the detective is a woman in the novel with a male name, to amplify the gender ambiguity.

In fact, the mutation of classic masculine domineering detectives of traditional detective fiction into androgynous figures in contemporary detective novels opens up a new space to put phallogocentric ideological discourses in dispute and subvert its oppressive classifications and systematizations within the microcosm of the novel so as to claim alternative

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[20] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 1.

[21] F. Kermode, "A Thriller with Something on Its Mind: Night Train" *The Atlantic Monthly* (1998) 101.

[22] N. Bentley, *"Mid-Life Crises: The Information and Night Train" Martin Amis* (Tavistock: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 80.

pluralities to rigid ideological categories. In this context, the detective in *Night Train* is both a subversive parody of traditional detective figures, and it overtly functions to offer alternative pluralities in identity formation and a sleuth who is genderless, sexless, both masculine and feminine, hard to classify, hard to systematize, with blurred identity boundaries. The detective, Mike Hoolihan resembles herself to "highly politicized feminists" noting her masculine voice "deepened by three decades of nicotine abuse" beside her "rural rather than urban – flat, undecided" features.[23] With a body that resembles "politicized feminists" and is affiliated with both masculinity and femininity and without any concrete signs demonstrating a stable gender identity, Mike Hoolihan does not comply with the "cultural intelligibility" of the society since, in the novel, as Bentley also notes, there is both an "experiment with the female voice [which] is largely negated by the emphasis on the masculine aspects of Hoolihan's character.[24]

The portrayal of a protagonist like Mike in *Night train* is an attempt to blur the limits of cultural intelligibility and also underline gender fluidity. As a character outside the circle of what is definable or known, Mike is always taken for a man in several occasions because of her masculine demeanour and voice. All throughout the novel, it is deliberately underlined several times that Mike has diverse gender and sex signs and performatives which break down the usual signification process for her gender, and eventually blur her identity and lead to her erroneous categorization, which as a result evidences the significance of performative in gender formation and arbitrariness or socially constructed nature of gender norms. *Night Train*, with a character like Mike makes a critique of the categories applied on individuals in line with Judith Butler's suggestion, "the task is to formulate within this constituted frame a critique of the categories of identity that contemporary juridical structures engender, naturalize, and immobilize."[25] She is also in contrast with Amis' women figures in his masterpieces, and she is more like the author's male characters in these novels, like John Self or Keith Talent, who are either excessively masculine with a huge body and often with an addiction to drugs, smoking, alcohol, sex, or food. Therefore, Mike, a heavy smoker, an alcoholic in recovery, and "a forty-four-year-old police with coarse blonde hair, bruiser's tits and broad shoulders, and pale blue eyes,"[26] is often taken for a

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[23] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 2.

[24] N. Bentley, "Mid-Life Crises: The Information and Night Train" Martin Amis (Tavistock: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 72.

[25] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 7.

[26] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 43.

man, and she often reacts to this saying, "[t]his is happening to me more and more often: The sir thing. If I introduce myself over the phone it never occurs to anybody that I'm not a man. I'm going to have to carry around a little pack of nitrogen or whatever – the stuff that makes you sound like Tweetie Bird."[27] A great number of people Mike meets or talks, think of her as a man because of her performance in public, and she looks like a male, talks like a male, and acts like a male, so her very own actions lead the society associate her with a different gender and sex she is traditionally categorized in.

Later in the novel, Mike reveals the fact that people take her for a man partly because of the profession she has. She is a detective and this helps her occupy the role of the dominant in a usual binary opposition, which is normally associated with masculinity and the male, so she remarks,

> There I am in my parka, my black jeans. They think I'm a diesel.
> Or a truck driver from the Soviet Union. But the men know at
> once what I am. Because I give them the eyeball – absolutely
> direct. As a patrol cop, on the street, that's the first thing you
> have to train yourself to do: Stare at men. In the eyes. . . . no other
> kind of woman on earth, not a movie star, not a brain surgeon,
> not a head of state, will stare at a man the way a police stares.[28]

Her association with highly masculine figures in the excerpt above and the emphasis in the power in her stares as well as the association of her outfit with masculine figures like a "diesel" or "truck driver" reveal how a woman at a position from where she can alter the power structure with the help of being a part of the law enforcement is laid bare, and this demonstrates how the phallogocentric classification of individuals based on their sex, body, physical appearance, or outfit are merely arbitrary.

In addition to her male name and the association of her body and her physical appearance and demeanour to masculine figures, the language she uses is a sign to consider her an example of the ambiguous gender representation in a work of fiction because of the slang and swear she commonly uses, which traditionally in detective novels are linked with hardboiled male detectives of the genre. As Bentley also notes, "the gender of Mike's voice is subsumed in the occupational style of language she uses", and this is very obvious particularly in the first part of the novel, titled "Blowback" which begins with the exact dates written at the top of each section alluding to a report taken by a police officer. The direct immediate expressions and slang that are very possible to hear in a Hollywood serial about a police

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[27] M. Amis, 24.

[28] M. Amis, 35.

department or see in an American hardboiled detective novel are scattered through Mike's casual language. Short and tough replies or expressions from Mike, such as "[w]hen you're a police, 'worst' is an elastic concept. You can't really get a fix on 'worst.' The boundaries are pushed out every other day. 'Worst?' we'll ask. 'There's no such thing as *worst*;'"[29] "[h]ere is my personal 'ten-card' . . . I'm now in Asset Forfeiture, but for eight years I was in Homicide. I worked murders. . . A few words about my appearance. The physique I inherited from my mother. Way ahead of her time;"[30] or words with repetitive sounds like,

> [s]o I've seen them all: Jumpers, stumpers, dumpers, dunkers, bleeders, floaters, poppers, bursters. I have seen the bodies of bludgeoned one-year-olds. I have seen the bodies of gang-raped nonagenarians. I have seen bodies left dead so long that your only shot at a t.o.d. is to weigh the maggots."[31]

demonstrate the hardboiled vernacular that Amis adopts from American detective fiction writers. Bentley also points at this similarity noting, Mike's "voice is marked more by the American working-class idiom . . . than by any distinct femininity."[32] Several terminological words related to criminology and the police work are used to hide any affiliation of Mike to femininity, and as Bentley notes, "Mike's gender is subsumed in her job, and there is very little to distinguish her style of language from a male cop."[33] However, although this is the case on the one hand, on the other, particularly in the second and third part of the novel, as Kermode also notes, Mike's voice turns into a soft confessional mode with a great extent of sentimentality at times,[34] and the reader is informed in more detail about how she was usurped by her father when she was a kid, how she became an alcoholic, how she, in several ways, envied Jennifer's life and family. Mike's confessional voice becomes more emotional specifically in the last part where she becomes suicidal and reveals a great deal about her intense feelings. When she is to face Jennifer's body on the autopsy table, she commemorates the dead by drawing attention melodramatically to her affiliations and relationships, [t]his is the body that

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[29] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 1.

[30] M. Amis, 2.

[31] M. Amis, 4.

[32] N. Bentley, "Mid-Life Crises: The Information and Night Train" Martin Amis (Tavistock: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 72.

[33] N. Bentley, 81.

[34] F. Kermode, "A Thriller with Something on Its Mind: Night Train" *The Atlantic Monthly* (1998) 103.

Miriam bore, that Colonel Tom protected that Trader Faulkner caressed that Hi Tulkinghorn tended, that Paulie No cut"[35] although she is a murder police and claims she has seen any sort of murder. Later, she also admits how she is haunted by Jennifer's death revealing "I've never seen one that sat with me like the body of Jennifer Rockwell, propped there naked after the act of love and life, saying this, all this, I leave behind."[36] The examples given here would not mean certainly that Mike's voice has become more feminine or less masculine, yet one thing becomes clear, and that is her voice changes from a tough hardboiled police vernacular to a self-scrutinizing emotional one which might be considered negating obviously the former one. Therefore, the language Mike has in the novel problematizes the vernacular adhered to women in fiction, to those particularly in traditional detective novels, and it helps to blur the borderline of a classification based on gender norms.

Furthermore, the novel also draws attention to both the oppression on individuals who do not meet the expectations of the society and how they repress themselves to comply with the classification they are coerced. Mike muses to herself sometimes, "[i]t is not too late. I'm going to change my name. To something feminine. Like detective Jennifer Hoolihan."[37] On one hand, this example shows the fact that "the cultural intelligibility" might be in contrast with what individuals are and how they perform their gender roles, so it becomes obvious that gender is, as Butler suggests, nothing but "the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."[38] On the other, Mike's confession above demonstrates how she feels a need to move inside the category, the center that is defined and limited for women, leaving the burden of being a periphery. This intrinsic motive in her is because of the inculcation of a self-regulating system by the patriarchal ideology, and as Butler remarks, "[t]he social constraints upon gender compliance and deviation are so great that most people feel deeply wounded if they are not really manly or womanly, that they have failed to execute their manhood or womanhood properly."[39] It is clear in the example cited above that the oppression of the powerful and the subjugation of the inferior is not mainly applied through coercion in societies, yet, what is more effective in this structure is the establishment of a self-controlling mechanism

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[35] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 135.

[36] M. Amis, 146.

[37] M. Amis, 105.

[38] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 45.

[39] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41.

among and inside the subjugated individuals. Butler notes how both women and men feel an oppression to perform according to the expectations of the society they live in, and if they do not they are mostly traumatized. Hence in parallel to the arguments of performative, the collective actions of a group that is classified by gender or sex of its members identify a "proper" framework or a safe zone for the group, and having a proper female name is one of them, and Mike with her male name that she associates with her masculine appearance, her deep voice, and her muscular physique, and she feels a pressure to change her name into something feminine in order to meet the cultural expectations or the criteria that society collectively constructed for her gender, yet by doing so, she also subverts the cultural intelligibility that confine women in to rigid roles, appearance, and activities.

The ambivalent portrayal of Mike's gender, is further amplified in *Night Train* through problematizing her sexual preferences. Butler in her book *Gender Trouble*, draws attention, first to how the collective unconscious is structured to legitimize the dichotomy of man, the masculine and the other, the feminine or woman, and second to the need to subvert the idea that women are biologically equipped with such notions as maternity, femininity, female desire and feminine sexuality that are culturally and historically associated with all women.[40] She objects the association of being a woman to being feminine, female and maternal, and she claims, once women cut loose from these cultural yokes, "[t]he culturally constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its 'natural' past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities."[41] Indeed, this is what the representation of Mike exemplifies in *Night Train* as a result of an ambivalent portrayal of her sexuality, and thus, the cultural intelligibility is problematized further. Although she claims to have a heterosexual relationship with a boyfriend, Tobe, there is no single scene in which he is present, and even in the apartment where Mike has been depicted, Tobe is never seen. He is like an imaginary figure that Mike has taken up in order to move her life into society level of the "proper" and "intelligible," and that is why, at a time of psychosis, Mike speculates on whether she has a boyfriend or she lives alone and whether she lives with Tobe or Deniss, her alleged boyfriend, and as if she desired to refute the fact that she lives alone, she cries "I don't live alone. I don't live alone. I live with Tobe."[42] Although Mike may appear as a woman who is in need of a relationship at times like the one mentioned above, it is seen clearly

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[40] J. Butler, 125.

[41] J. Butler, 127.

[42] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 26.

throughout the novel, she is not in search for any sort of these commitments. Therefore, the characterization of Mike as such exemplifies the possible ambivalent sexual preferences and commitments that women might have as opposed to traditional cultural expectations, which as a result would mean "her fundamental, self-evident identity as a woman . . . is not self-evident, not to others, and, . . . not quite to herself either."[43] The ambivalence in Mike's gender is deliberately furthered all throughout the novel since she reveals very little to clarify it, and as Bentley also points out, "in as sense [she] likes her gender ambiguity" and avoids fitting in any gender norms.[44]

In line with her obvious effort to enjoy her gender ambiguity, Mike's alleged boyfriend is deliberately absented in the narrative, and it becomes more evocative when it is considered that the name Tobe might be used to suggest the reader "to be," which could mean "the boyfriend to be" and represent an unreal boyfriend or refer to a wishful thinking. Such a wordplay is not unusual, particularly when it is situated within the oeuvre of Amis whose wordplays and distinctive naming of characters prevail his masterpieces like *Money* and *London Fields*. The protagonist narrator of *Money*, is a selfish, self-important, gluttonous overweight named John Self; and in *London Fields*, one of the main characters in the novel, Keith is humorously surnamed as "Talent," but introduced in the narrative as a villain with no evil skills to consider him a talented one. Similarly, *Night Train* is abundant in this sort of names playfully used, like the use of name Mike for a "woman" detective, a suggestive name like Tobe as an imaginary boyfriend, Trader Faulkner as an old man and Jennifer's lover whose rhetoric leads the detective Mike to cry like a child while she was interrogating him, Tulkinghurn as the family doctor alluding to Dicken's *Bleak House*; and thus, the use of such allusive names in *Night Train* not only "reinforces the fictionality and the artificiality of the story," as Diedrick suggests,[45] but also opens a space for the novel to make a critique of the ideological discourse in detective novels and of patriarchal discursive practices prevalent in the society.

Furthermore, although Mike appears much like a butch figure, with queer preferences, this is not made very explicit in the novel, as well, and there are implications hinting that she might be one, or a heterosexual and perhaps an

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[43] B. Duffy, "From a Good Firm Knot to a Mess of Loose Ends: Identity and Solution in Martin Amis' *Night Train*" *Investigating Identities: Questions of Identity in Contemporary International Crime Fiction* (New York: Rodopi, 2009), 313.

[44] N. Bentley, "Mid-Life Crises: The Information and Night Train" Martin Amis (Tavistock: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 81.

[45] J. Diedrick, Understanding Martin Amis (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 165.

asexual person. On the one hand, she persistently reminds of the reader that she has a boyfriend, and she has had heterosexual relationships all throughout her life; on the other, she experiences a passionate involvement in the life of Jennifer the felon-de-se, and has an intense self-identification or a sort of commitment with her implicating a homosexual desire that surfaces with the investigation out, which, as a result, turns into a self-investigation leading her to explore her own identity. For instance, having detailed descriptions of Jennifer's body often as beautiful and slender and musing on how pleasant it is to look at as opposed to her huge colossal body with "coarse blonde hair, bruiser's tits and broad shoulders,"[46] Mike draws a fine line between Jennifer's feminine beauty and the masculine outsize body of herself. Another more obvious suggestion is made in "Part 3" titled "The Seeing," where Mike confesses how Jennifer has haunted herself, particularly how she has felt the "burning" in her body, "in the armpits,"[47] and cannot stop thinking about her. The characterization of Mike in the novel covertly points at a homosexual attraction to or a relationship with Jennifer, and in the chapter where she begins "Jennifer Rockwell fell burning out of a clear blue sky," there, her boyfriend Tobe is reported "was long gone,"[48] and Tobe, who may be representing an imaginary relationship as mentioned above, is absented from her life when Mike is completely absorbed in Jennifer's life. Therefore, although the novel does not explicitly present a queer as the protagonist, there are implications hinting it is so and the story does not involve anything that would demonstrate she is a heterosexual or an asexual, so it becomes clear that the novel purports to problematize traditional gender expectations and to emphasize the significance of individual choices and preferences in gender construction.

The novel emphasizes the ambiguity or fluidity in sexuality through representing Mike as a figure who has both signs that could be taken for her femininity and some other hints that reveal her disinterestedness in traditional heterosexual or homosexual preferences. She herself remarks "I feel grateful for quiet workloads on such days as this, days of lethargy and faint but persistent nausea which have to do with my time of life, and my liver. More my liver than my unused womb;"[49] and to draw attention to how distant she is from the maternity she refers to her "womb" which is defined as "the organ in the body of a woman or other female mammal in which a

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[46] M. Amis, *Night Train* (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 43.

[47] M. Amis, 133.

[48] M. Amis, 133.

[49] M. Amis, 40.

baby develops before birth."[50] Women have been historically and with no exception associated with maternity by the dominant patriarchal ideology as one of the original biological traits of all women, since, at one point in the novel, Trader Faulkner as the mouthpiece of collective unconscious, asserts "[w]omen want children" – as referring to Jennifer – and Mike reflects "[h]e [Trader] looks at me, my own flesh, my eyes. And he's thinking: Yeah. All women except this woman."[51] Her colleague at the police force who is described by Mike as a "hardon" and who makes use of every chance to sleep with anyone that "has ever thrown a pass at him" complains Mike has "just slapped him around a few times" hinting she has nothing to do with a relationship with a man.[52] Moreover, as if drawing attention to the ever-lonely asexual life of Mike all throughout her life, Jennifer is narrated to have planned a date night with a man named Arn Debs before she dies, and Mike meets him at Hotel Mallard. The room they meet in is in "The Decoy Room," suggesting the planted decoy nature of this date and the reality that Mike is a woman who needs to act as an impostor to survive in a patriarchal society. On the one hand, she needs to look like a man at times to interrogate suspects like a police officer would do, stare at people like a man would do, in the eye directly and sharply to establish a power over them since she is a detective who would need to be the dominant traditionally; on the other, she needs to pretend that she is a feminine figure with female sexual drives and preferences. However, when her portrayal is considered as a whole, these fraudulent identities Mike suggests in the novel underscore her position as woman who is asexual and genderless. She is subverting such binary oppositions as male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, maternal/paternal via breaking down traditional gender and sexual roles in the society by distorting the repeated performance formula assigned to her class, in other words, to all women, and her position in society as a detective who has been traditionally associated with the superior, the masculine and the dominant, helps her in this quest, and as Diedrick suggests with Mike in *Night Train* "Amis would create a female character whose voice, altitude, and behaviour raise questions about the very meaning of gender."[53]

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[50] "Womb," *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary*
https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/womb.

[51] M. Amis, Night Train (USA: Harmony Books, 1997), 49.

[52] M. Amis, 32.

[53] J. Diedrick, Understanding Martin Amis (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995) 161.

Conclusion

As it becomes clear in the examples cited above, the patriarchal ideology and its discursive practices and state apparatuses confine women in rigid social and cultural roles and expect them to fulfil these roles regardless of individualities, diverse identities, or personal preferences, and Mike Hoolihan in *Night Train* is portrayed as a woman getting by as a detective in the police force where she is supposed to act as if she is not female, and outside the police force as a woman who is not to act like a masculine figure. The arbitrary nature of the societal expectations regarding gender and sexuality is evidenced in the novel and it becomes clear that, as Butler notes, "[g]enders can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived,"[54] and the biological sex or the sexual drives of individuals cannot be classified or systematized under rigid groups since where there is a human, there is the possibility of "swerves." The novel *Night Train* features a protagonist detective who exemplifies the ambivalent nature of gender, sex, and sexuality so as to subvert those stereotypical roles that the hegemonic logocentric patriarchal ideology imposes on individuals. At this point, Amis's novel exemplifies the existence of fissures within the patriarchal discourse on gender and sex classification, and in line with Butler's suggestion, "[t]he task is not whether to repeat [attributes of gender], but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself,"[55] and functioning as a detective novel that is considered projecting "a thorough questioning of metaphysical truths,"[56] *Night Train* attains the level of "questioning of metaphysical truths" with the portrayal of an unusual protagonist like Mike in a detective novel to repeat an oft-performed duty, that is to be a woman and also to be a detective since she performs these in a different way that would be a significant example in the proliferation or displacement of gender norms.

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[54] J. Butler, Gender Trouble (New York: Routledge, 2006), 193.

[55] J. Butler, 202.

[56] M.J. Martínez-Alfaro, "A Look into the Abyss: The Unsolvable Enigma of the Self and the Challenges of Metaphysical Detection in Martin Amis's *Night Train*" *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 40, no.1, (2010), 110.

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