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FICTION, NON-FICTION AND “THE SECOND PLANE” BY M. AMIS

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The article is dedicated to the obtrusive co-existence of fiction and non-fiction in modern literature, especially characteristic of the 21st century, which has been fluorescent with genre and style varieties, often on the verge of blurring their boundaries. The research has been carried out on “The Second Plane” collection by M. Amis which gives much room for investigating the fringe between short story, essay and *ladlit* discursively bound together by the author’s telling fiction utilizing the means of actualization.

Key words: fiction, non-fiction, creative writing, short story, essay, *ladlit*.

The theory of literature, as all other disciplines, has terms not quite defined or rather not completely definable, for they may stand far beyond the boundaries of self-determination; but in case of literature, if compared to science, this problem is even more acute, as literature makes real and unreal stand side by side and generally makes them interpenetrated. In this case, the problem of correlating fiction and non-fiction also concerns genre transformation and author’s universalization.

The aim of the research is to disclose the fiction and non-fiction correlation with genre peculiarities in “The Second Plane” by M. Amis. The novelty is predetermined by the unifying approach to the role of image, genre peculiarities and formal structure of the literary work in the process of creating the true-to-life imagined world. The concerns touched upon are those referring to the literature study, epistemology, logics and lingual culturology, which makes the research topical.

The three manuscript keepers of the autobiographies of great nations... whatever grand and binding their unity may be, the abyss between them is not less grand and defiant; this paradox is to ever exist, until the book of deeds, the book of words and the book of art stop the perpetual rebirth from one into another. Like what is being done now can become the history in a moment and a legend in a few generations or, with the speed of the modern world, almost right on the spot [1, p. 17–18].

For literature, either defined as “creative writing” or “writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect”, the limits of extension also remain quite vague, at least when it comes to separating fiction from non-fiction; for today there is much fiction that is to a certain extent non-fictional and non-fiction which has very little to do with facts [2, c. XXIX].

Facts are the natural base for science, the final recourse in the dispute of theory and practice, but still there are no sensual images deprived of sense and understanding of perceptible

things, therefore all scientific facts are fated to be freely interpreted [3]. The same goes for fiction and non-fiction. At least, relativism is a trend again, in the age of postmodernity, the age of death of truth. For this research paper there has been accepted the definition of fiction as "*something invented by the imagination or feigned*" [4], and non-fiction, consequently, being the opposite – *not invented by the imagination and not feigned*.

"The Second Plane" by M. Amis has been of great resonance and ambiguity in the literature world. It is a collection of twelve essays and two short stories, two different genres being unified by the author under the same cover, and of the fourteen published pieces, each seems to be a part of the same story. What is more, each can be the beginning of it, but none provides for the complete end of the topic developed, the topic being Islamism and its dangers to the rationalist European society.

The modern short story strives to compactness, emotional, intellectual, and moral ambiguity. Being one of the most common forms of writing, the essay is still a form of writing to which very little critical attention is paid. It has a freedom of range in terms of content and form. Precisely because it is an elastic and accommodating genre and has varied uses, styles and forms, the genre of the essay is acknowledged as protean. In his Author's Note M. Amis straightly outlines: "Geopolitics may not be my natural subject, but masculinity is" [5], which shifts spotlight on another comparatively recently-developed genre, *ladlit*, the literature "about men and for men", providing for the ideal of masculinity or as defined by R. Holder "slightly pornographic" [6]. This genre flourishing in 1990s, characteristically romantic, confessional, postmodern, often comic and attributed to novels, has gone the way of procreating a certain style of writing, which in case of M. Amis can be called an author's style, the central figure for him being man, mostly in his objectively negative incarnations. However, *ladlit* rose lately before falling into sales and critical obscurity. This downward trend at the turn of the millennium coincided with more large-scale movements in global publishing. Market forces had led to the globalization of the publishing industry, with a small number of media conglomerates acquiring the bulk of the publishing power in the United States, Europe and Australia. Alongside this shift in ownership came a shift in the focus of publishers, with an increased importance placed upon the economic significance of titles, rather than their cultural value [7, p. 208].

As mentioned above, "The Second Plane" collection is the amalgamated concentration of short story, essay and *lad lit* features, and also due to this and a number of other factors to be counted on, is the product of the modern 'postmodern' reality of life and literature.

In "The Art of Fiction" David Lodge claims the title to be more important for the author than the reader who is often prone to forget or muddle the titles of the books [8, p. 193–197]; in "The Second Plane" that can be read either from the middle or from the end, the author unobtrusively suggests the logical progression by two simple means – chronological order of the narrations presented and title organization, which is anything but random.

The following binary combinations for the titles under consideration can be traced:

- 1) Publicistic type (implying a question : raising a question);
- 2) Fiction (as a genre) type (paradox-like, oxymoronic : calling for deep reflection);
- 3) Narrative type (trite : non-trite).

The first essay is called "*The Second Plane*", which also provided for the name of the whole collection, and strongly suggests the beginning of the end, which happens to be found

somewhere in the middle, as of the two planes that turned the Twin Towers into ashes, the first brought shock, while the second one brought terror, for it excluded all possibility of coincidence and banal air catastrophe.

A number of titles suggests reader's seeking to find answers to certain implicit or directly put questions: "*The Wrong War*" (it is clear that the war the author refers to is the War in Iraq, but why is it wrong?), "*The Last Days of Muhammad Atta*" (what were they like?), "*What will survive of us*" (this is a question itself), "*Demographics*" (what about it?).

Another group of titles seeks mystifying and enchanting effect on the reader, like "*The Voice of the Lonely Crowd*" (combining the paradox of the crowd being lonely, and its having not a millennial murmur, roar or polyphony, but one voice), "*Terror and Boredom: The Dependent Mind*" (another paradox combination of terror being boring obviously and openly inviting the reader to a philosophical reflection), "*In the Palace of the End*" (the title, in fact, refers the reader to the docudrama play by Judith Thompson including real-life tales in Iraq before and after 2003, with the implication of the expected horror), "*Iran and the Lord of Time*" (the paradox reference to the really existing country and extraterrestrial race who can control time from "Doctor Who" or the ancient mythological god of time, Chronos, and also Imam who is believed to be capable of time control), "*Conspiracy Theories, and Takfir*" (which calls to adventure spiced with historic and religious investigation) and "*Bush in Yes-Man's Land*" (the image of the yes-man stands extensively brightly in minds of readers, but may hardly be directly associated with the 43d US President, what is more, another image from the eponymous movie screened in 2008 adds to the comic and vibrant effect).

The last, but not least, group of the titles is of narrative character, unifying casual and non-casual: "*On the move with Tony Blair*" (everyone may enjoy the trip – move, but not with such outstanding figure as Tony Blair, in this case simplicity hints at the predetermined complication) and "*An Islamist's Journey*" (journey, either as a trip or the course of life may be easily treated, but not with the word defining it – Islamist).

The title of the last essay is "*September 11*", which in some way repeats the title of the first essay, that is strongly associated with nothing else than 9/11, but in this case September 11 is the resume, the conclusion, it is not a single event, not a single act of terror, but a completed image of it. The quote from the movie about Jack the Ripper "From Hell" says: "*One day, men will look back and say that I gave birth to the 20th Century.*" For Martin Amis it is not necessary to look far back to realize that early 21st century he lives in was to a greater part brought up by 9/11. In this way non-fiction easily becomes fiction of the new millennium, in fact, the author himself becomes a fictitious character as soon as he appears on the pages of his books.

Martin Amis appears in each piece included in "*The Second Plane*". In the two short stories of the collection, "*In the Palace of the End*" and "*The Last Days of Muhammad Atta*", the "I" of the author is never explicit, but the effect created is that Martin Amis himself tells the stories; he, put on the place of a Saddam's son's double and later Muhammad Atta, tells the prose of life. The two short stories are inserted right in the middle of the book, while in all the essays the appearing "I" belongs exclusively to the author, whereas suddenly the "I" of "*In the Palace of the End*" shifts to become the "I" of "one of the doubles of the son of the dictator... often to be found in the Palace of the End". In "*The Last days of Muhammad Atta*" "I" disappears, but it is replaced by the no less stronger "He", which suggests if not for

the confrontation, but for the inquisitive estrangement between the author and his character, the author being the investigator trying to follow the trace of his imagined creation. In the introduction to this short story the author emphasizes that nobody knows why the terrorists on the first plane to shake the world on September 11, went to Portland the day before just to catch the passenger jet. M. Amis invents a story that explains this short trip as a willfulness of a Shia representative to visit his sick Imam for the last time, the explanation which goes along with the course he suggested in the essays forgoing this short story. Thus, M. Amis again challenges the boundaries of fiction and non-fiction as he himself becomes a fictitious character and dissolves in his works. What is more, his essays also become of rather fiction character due to the created images of Ronald Reagan, the USSR, the Middle East, Church of England, PC (political correctness), Nabokov, Mullah Omar, Sayyid Qutb and many more in a row, whatever humans or institutions. These are literary images, the images only to be produced by imagination, the ones the author makes palpable enough to be taken as real.

Martin Amis has stated repeatedly that he is by no means an Islamophobe, but Islamismophobe, and his complete collection is dedicated to the purpose of revealing the dangers of extremism in its particular form – Islamism, still very often the notions of Islam and Islamism are not clearly defined by him.

As long as each religion has its followers and opponents, it also has its victims. Ideology, derived from religion and presenting a set of ideas (in this case the ideas of the individual sourcing from his personal and social experience as a human, thinker and writer), also has its victims, "victims of fiction". M. Amis creates a persuasively true-to-live non-fiction world within his fiction. All the components of this world, that is characters, setting, time, place and humans are just referred to take on a new part of being details in the image-building mechanism of Islam and Islamism world. M. Amis adopts a few concepts for transferring this image in "The Second Plane":

- 1) Facts adoption (selected journalistic materials, references and quotes in support of the idea of perpetual evil of Islamism);
- 2) Characters adoption (grim, frightening, ideologically and religiously obsessed MEN, generally sexually dissatisfied or impotent, not knowing the taste of life, living in a nightmare of 'Unknown Unknowns');
- 3) Space adoption (the Middle East, the Palace of the End, the regiments of Al-Qaida contrasted with the peace of the New York streets and daily routine, or intentionally shown as routine to dramatize and hyperbolize the reality of thousand victims, daily tortures and promiscuity and to vividly present the neighbouring of "*terror and boredom*");
- 4) Time adoption (it is now when the events happen, it is now when the body of the building crashes against the heart of Muhammad Atta and it is now when about 20 doubles of the Palace of the End receive scars and wounds just to resemble the original receiver of them whose face and body they live to scrupulously repeat. It is now that the writer and the reader are 'on a move with Tony Blair' discussing the war, the Queen, Bush and miscellaneous. The past is only the road inevitably leading to the present.);
- 5) Bibliography (personalia) adoption (Mahdi, Osama bin Laden, George Bush Jr., George Bush Sr., Lenin, etc, and their biographies or expressions employed in support of the idea of Islamic vice);

- 6) Literary adoption (creation of the negative reference to the issue under consideration with the help of emotive constructions and stylistic devices, e.g. “*thy mystery of religious intoxication*”, “*the shiver of dreads asylum*”, “*poisonous breath of Islamism*”, etc.)

In the current research we have come to the following conclusions:

1. In “The Second Plane” M. Amis crosses the nominal border between fiction and non-fiction providing for the characteristically postmodern assemblage style of writing within the glimpse of *ladlit*.
2. The essays and two short stories presented in the collection make up an artificially unified whole with a structure and sequence determined both by chronology of writing and the titles provided by the author.
3. The titles of the literary works under study are ‘economically’ and logically corresponding to the publishing standards of the 21st century and are also meant to accordingly introduce the reader to the fictitious world created by the author.
4. The author’s direct or indirect presence in all 14 works under study makes M. Amis a part of his fictitious world, which causes greater shift of fiction and non-fiction towards each other.
5. The Islamism described by M. Amis is to a greater extent the Islamism set within fiction due to a number of author’s techniques and, therefore, cannot be seen beyond creative writing.

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FICTION, NON-FICTION AND “THE SECOND PLANE BY M. AMIS”

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Розглянуто проблему співіснування факту та вигадки на стику художньої та популярної літератури, яке обумовлюється виключними факторами, що впроваджує 21 сторіччя, коли свого піку набуває змішання різних варіацій жанрів та стилів, межі між якими наразі часто зникають. Дослідження було проведено на основі збірки Мартіна Еміса “The Second Plane”, яка дає можливість повною мірою відстежити взаємодію таких жанрів, як оповідь, есе та *ladlit*, поєднаних авторським викладанням художньої вигадки за допомогою механізмів актуалізації.

Ключові слова: художня вигадка, факт, креативне письмо, оповідання, есе, *ladlit*.

FICTION, NON-FICTION AND “THE SECOND PLANE” BY M. AMIS

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Рассмотрено проблему сосуществования факта и художественного вымысла на стыке художественной и популярной литературы, что обуславливается исключительными условиями, которые диктует 21 век, когда своего пика достигает смешение разных вариаций жанров и стилей, границы между которыми подчас стираются. Исследование проводилось на основе сборника Мартина Эмиса “The Second Plane”, который дает возможность в полной мере проследить взаимодействие таких жанров, как рассказ, эссе и *ladlit*, связанных авторским изложением художественного вымысла с помощью механизмов актуализации.

Ключевые слова: художественный вымысел, факт, креативное письмо, рассказ, эссе, *ladlit*.