

From a Good Firm Knot to a Mess of Loose Ends: Identity and Solution in Martin Amis's *Night Train*

Detective fiction survived for quite a while on the simple formula of a crime and its detection, and in the process reassuringly brought order to disorder, understanding to enigma, answers to questions. But from Dashiell Hammett through to our own sceptical, unstable times it has all gone wrong. Realism and anti-detective fiction have disturbed the rational, teleological narrative, the inexorable causal movement towards a solution. Detective narratives have gone the way of other grand narratives: they have *lost* their way, they have lost the plot, they have lost the answer. In keeping with, and articulating, the spirit of the age, they have lost faith. We might say they have gone postmodern.

Martin Amis's exploitation of the detective fiction genre in his novel, *Night Train*, is indeed a text of impeccable postmodern sensibility, but one which, in its appropriation of the styles, conventions, and intentions of different schools of detective fiction, reveals itself ultimately to be a thoroughly hybrid and restless creation, mixing detective and anti-detective fiction modes, drawing upon the hard-boiled American *noir* idiom and the decentred postmodern sensibility, blending ugly realism and metaphysical speculation, and challenging throughout facile solutions to the question of identity, be it of genre, character, or reality.

The novel's postmodern credentials are displayed in its treatment of two of the quintessential concerns of detective fiction, namely identity and solution. The conventional and essentially comforting "whodunnit" understanding of identity at the heart of detective fiction is subverted in *Night Train*, transformed into a "whydunnit," into a question that can only be answered by what is at once a more fundamental and more metaphysical interrogation of the concept of identity, one initiating a shadowy existential dance between the identities of the female detective and the female victim.

This article will seek to trace the development of these interweaving modalities and concerns of the text, and proposes to do so in accompanying the unfolding of the narrative itself, a reading and interpretive strategy that receives a kind of justification in the novel by way of the narrator/detective's own metaphor for the narrative dynamic of her account and the troubled

condition of her investigation: “I have taken a good firm knot and reduced it to a mess of loose ends.”¹

What is it in *Night Train* that allows it to turn so fiercely on its traditions, to actually reverse detective fiction’s habitual movement from disorder to order? It is surely the nature of the crime, the change from homicide to suicide, but it is also the identity of the perpetrator of the particular crime in *Night Train*. For what does it mean that a woman who has everything kills herself? This is the task of the detection in *Night Train*, the imposing question that cannot be avoided, the source of the great unravelling. “Suicide is the night train, speeding your way to darkness” (67).²

The narrative takes the form of a first-person account by Detective Mike Hoolihan of what she calls “the worst case I have ever handled” (1). The main part of the narrative is retrospective, but, at the moment of its narration, the investigation has not yet reached its conclusion. What we read brings us up to date, before the events at the end of the book take place, when Mike herself will discover where the investigation finally leads. The narrative, then, is something of an attempt to achieve what it is given to narrative to achieve: to find links, to establish cause and effect, to produce coherence, to supply an answer. This matters to Mike *because* it’s the worst case she has ever handled, “for me, that is” (1). And because “I am part of the story I am going to tell” (4). Life and literature are full of self-narrations, of the narrative construction of selves and identities. But if this is such a bad case for Mike, it’s because her police investigation has drawn her into an unwelcome personal examination, and the identity she finds herself articulating and constructing in her narrative contains no comfort at all. It is this bifurcating investigation, initially of an act of suicide that is grotesquely the wrong conclusion to the valuable and valid life it terminates, which pitilessly confronts Mike with the value and validity of her own life.

That everything has become mixed up for Mike in the experience of the investigation is clear from the outset of her *narration* of the investigation. What is supposed to be the delineation of the facts of the case is deflected by and tinged with an existential anxiety about her identity and a metaphysical apprehension about where her story and investigation is leading her. Mike is a woman with a man’s name, a man’s physique, and a deep voice, “further deepened by three decades of nicotine abuse” (2). What should go without saying — her fundamental, self-evident identity as a woman — has to be said, because it is not self-evident, not to others, and,

somewhere — if for different though not unrelated reasons — not quite to herself either. The name, the build, and the voice have Mike frequently taken for a man, and not just on the phone (“This is happening to me more and more often: The sir thing”, 31). Mike’s body is not as she would like it to be. She describes herself at one point as “a forty-four-year-old police³ with coarse blond hair, bruiser’s tits and broad shoulders” (43). This is the outside, the body that she and others see. What she alone sees, and feels, is inside her body, “[my] body, so ordinary and asymmetrical, the source of so little pleasure or pride, so neglected, so parched” (25). And this is not the only wound, the only obstacle to an enabling, stable sense of self. She was “raised by the state” (3) from the age of ten, from the moment everything blew apart at home. And there was the alcohol, which nearly killed her. And then there is the business, the trauma, of being a “murder police,” of having seen too much human ugliness and horror: “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” (4). The hard-boiled tough talk here is as much a measure of the corrosive wear and tear on Mike’s sensibility as it is an appropriation of an idiom. She apologizes for “the bad language, the diseased sarcasm, and the bigotry” (4) in her account, and will shudder later on at “how hardbarked” (141) she has become. But there are limits, and after eight years in Homicide Mike reached hers: “I entered my own end-zone and couldn’t do it anymore” (4). Now she works in Asset Forfeiture. But one more dead body had to be looked at, the last, the worst: “[O]f all the bodies I have ever seen, none has stayed with me, in my gut, like the body of Jennifer Rockwell” (4).

All of this — what Mike is, why she has become so, what she thinks of herself — matters because of what this investigation does to her. The body of Jennifer Rockwell carries the force of an accusation against the body of Mike Hoolihan. The *life* of Jennifer Rockwell, as it emerges through the investigation, incriminates the life of Mike Hoolihan. This is why Mike becomes “part of the story” she is going to tell.

But what *is* it about Jennifer Rockwell that won’t leave Mike alone?

This will not leave her alone: when you are young, beautiful, intelligent, loved, admired, healthy, well balanced, financially secure, professionally successful to the point of having a reasonable opportunity of making a lasting contribution as an astrophysicist — when you are

happy, *this* happy, when everything about you and your life is so scandalously right, you are not supposed to kill yourself. Mike had known Jennifer — the daughter of Mike’s former Squad Supervisor in Homicide, Colonel Tom, the man who had guided Mike and saved her from alcohol — for twenty years, since Jennifer was eight years old:

She was a favorite of mine. But she was also a favorite of everybody else’s. And I watched her grow into a kind of embarrassment of perfection. Brilliant, beautiful. Yeah, I’m thinking: To-die-for brilliant. Drop-dead beautiful. And not intimidating — or only as intimidating as the brilliant-beautiful can’t help being, no matter how accessible they seem. She had it all and she had it all, and then she had some more. (7)

And one Sunday evening she made love with her adored and adoring partner, put a gun in her mouth and shot herself three times, still naked in the aftermath of love-making, and just moments after her partner, Trader Faulkner, had left their apartment. Everything at the scene says it was a suicide, but Colonel Tom wants a homicide, which is at least bearable, settling on Trader as the perpetrator: “Bring me something I can live with. Because I can’t live with this” (19), he says to Mike, asking her to investigate. Colonel Tom wants a homicide, because in the domain of violent, unnatural death, homicide is the intelligible option. It is brutal and shocking, but is, within its own macabre imperatives and primitive logic, wholly understandable, allowing simple answers to simple questions, as Mike reflects: “Police really are like footsoldiers in this respect at least. Ours not to reason why. Give us the how, then give us the who, we say. But fuck the why” (31). Colonel Tom wants a who, but there is none — Trader didn’t do it. It *was* suicide, and it is Trader, in beating off Mike’s Colonel Tom-inspired attempts to pin the murder on him, who makes the metaphysical leap across the gulf separating the simple questions about homicide from the powerful and inscrutable questions about suicide:

Mike, you’ve tied yourself up into all kinds of knots trying to make a mystery of this thing. . . . Some little mystery, all neat and cute. But there’s a real mystery here. An enormous mystery. . . . A woman fell out of a clear blue sky. And you

know something? I wish I *had* killed her. . . . Because that's better than what I'm looking at. (57)

From homicide to suicide: from the intelligible to the unintelligible, from the investigation of the circumstances of a death to a confrontation with the enigmas of a life. In changing the nature of the crime, and in exploring the existential resonances of suicide, Martin Amis has hugely extended the scope of the inquiry of his novel, has opened it up to the vast philosophical interrogation that accompanies suicide. Amis reflects on his preoccupation with suicide in his recent memoir,⁴ and quotes G. K. Chesterton who observed that “suicide was a heavier undertaking than murder. The murderer kills just one person. The suicide kills everybody.”⁵ From homicide to suicide: from an isolated human act to the general human condition, from a judgement on one to a judgement on everyone.

And, of course, from the who to the why. “If it's a suicide, I'm going to feel an awful big why” (31), muses Mike before the autopsy confirms that Jennifer has indeed killed herself. The move from a “whodunnit” to a “whydunnit” seems at first sight to shift the inquiry *away* from identity, as the goal of the investigation is no longer to determine the identity of an individual. But this latter, traditional preoccupation of detective fiction has more to do with identification than identity, with simple naming rather than with a radical inquiry into the philosophical and existential dimensions of the notions of personal identity and selfhood. Paradoxically, then, it is precisely in moving from a “whodunnit” to a “whydunnit,” with the subsequent shifting of focus from a death to a life, that the more profound implications of the concept of identity may be explored.

The why question, in fact, is simply another formulation of the who question, but this time with all the complexities and obscurities, enigmas and uncertainties, associated with personal identity. That this is the new question to be answered by Mike becomes clear on the day of Jennifer's funeral, when she speaks to Miriam, Jennifer's mother. Jennifer is dead, but her dead body has given up a secret about her life: “You didn't see the toxicology report. Tom made it disappear. Mike, Jennifer was on *lithium*” (63). In other words, the shiny, happy life was contaminated by something that had no business there — a mood stabilizer. It is Miriam who

draws the inevitable conclusion, who formulates the necessary question, the big identity question: “See, Mike, we were looking for a why. And I guess we found one. But suddenly we don’t have a who. Who was she, Mike?” (64)

We have arrived at the end of the first part of *Night Train*, by which time in the novel Amis has disconcerted and diverted the genre within which he is working, has both exploited and played with its idioms and conventions, has subverted the expectations it generates, and has substantially expanded the horizons — the thematic and philosophical possibilities — of its traditional inquiry. We have gone from who to why, then back to who again. But the difference between the initial and the revised who is profound: it’s the distance between the who of *doing* and the who of *being*, the disparity in metaphysical density between a single act and an entire existence. The former is the preoccupation of traditional detective fiction, while the latter represents the larger ambition of *Night Train*, its stab at the universal. Mike intuits as much when she agrees to seek an answer to Miriam’s question — she senses that “the death of Jennifer Rockwell was offering the planet a piece of new news: Something never seen before” (64). And she knew that it would lead to “something absolutely sombre” (64).

Mike investigates the events preceding Jennifer’s death and finds out this: along with the lithium there was Arn Debs, a graceless, tasteless hulk from Texas, whom Jennifer had met in a bar and whom she had promised to meet the next time he was in town; there was Jennifer’s momentous professional error in her calculations about the age of the universe, made the week before her death, but which only came to light the day after she killed herself; there was the uncharacteristic buying of things, such as the paintings which began to arrive at her apartment after her death; there was the book on suicide she had been reading, *Making Sense of Suicide*; and there was the suicide note, explaining everything, telling Trader that “[a]lmost exactly a year ago I started getting the sense that I was losing control of my thoughts” (117), that she had been on stabilizers for months, and comforting him with the assurance that he “couldn’t have done *anything any different*” (117). What Mike found was an emerging, typical suicide pattern, a concatenation turned up by basic detective work, culminating in the suicide note that confirmed that here was a life which appeared to be lived in a clear blue sky but which was in fact blighted

by an illness that became unbearable and uncontrollable. So Jennifer Rockwell killed herself.

As Mike sifts through the evidence, considers the pattern that is beginning to emerge, and reflects on the past, the subsequent evolution and the possibilities of a woman's life, she becomes deeply uneasy, almost inconsolable: so much has gone wrong, has been so wrong for so long — in her own life. Miriam asked Mike to investigate because she felt that a woman would see and understand things about a woman's life that a man would not. But the investigation into Jennifer's identity, into her life, into the love and tenderness and happiness and beauty assumed with the natural and easy grace of a birthright, sucks Mike into a confrontation with her own woman's life, which, when set beside the radiance of Jennifer's existence, seems sordid and vicious and mean. Slowly, but inexorably, the attempt to construct a narrative of a self has Mike as much as Jennifer as its existential subject.

Mike's presentation of herself at the outset revealed a sensitivity, a nervous vulnerability, a deep *anxiety*, about herself and her self-image, disclosed in the almost self-reproachful details about herself and her life — the male features, her overall appearance, the frequent mistaking of her for a man, her under-loved body, the booze, the vileness. The narration of the investigation articulates the stages of this evolving *self*-narrative, consisting essentially of a disinterment of Mike's past, going back to what began to happen when she was a little girl:

My father messed with me when I was a child. . . . Yeah he used to fuck me, okay? It started when I was seven and it stopped when I was ten. I made up my mind that after I hit double figures it just wasn't going to happen. . . . On the morning after my birthday he came at me in my bedroom. And I almost ripped his fucking face off. . . . Then my mother woke up. We were never a model unit, the Hoolihans. By noon that same day we ceased to exist. (86-7)

Mike doesn't construct a rigidly causal narrative, where what happens before explains, uniquely and inevitably, what happens after, but the detective in her sees a pattern, that of finding herself "hanging on the arms of woman-haters and woman-hitters" (146). She ends up with a succession of violent men: "These guys didn't just slap me around: We had fistfights that lasted

half an hour” (146). Here was a pattern that had hardened into a destiny: “Long ago I learnt that I cannot get the good guys” (111). Now she is with Tobe, and Tobe is a big improvement — Tobe doesn’t beat her. But here he is “watching a *taped* quiz show” (36), and here he is off “attending a video-game tournament” (143). Tobe doesn’t beat Mike, but Mike has taken too many beatings already, and, more than anything, her sense of being a woman has taken a beating — the harsh judgement of herself as being “just another big blonde old broad” (7) is one articulation of how her body is a reminder, is the experience, of her unfulfilled womanhood. Forty-four-year-old Mike intimates that she is menopausal, producing particular physical sensations but also a time-of-life — her expression — reflection about her “unused womb” (40), which culminates in another bitter self-assessment, a response to Trader’s explanation that Jennifer wanted to have children because “[s]he was a woman” and “[w]omen want children” (49): “He looks at me, my town flesh, my eyes. And he’s thinking: Yeah. All women except this woman” (49). Mike will insist later that she “never wanted a kid” (87), but her reaction to Trader’s remark nonetheless displays a preoccupation about her sense of being a woman and an anxiety about her inability to fully assume a woman’s identity.

Mike’s father abused her, violent men abused her, and Mike abused herself, with alcohol, and was saved only by Colonel Tom before one last, fatal binge. But she remains on this threshold, functioning, almost expectantly, under the shadow of her self-induced, and willed, Sword of Damocles: “We keep booze in the apartment and somehow I like to know it’s there even though it will kill me if I touch it” (21). It’s as if the accumulated effects of violence and disappointment, abuse and neglect, have pushed Mike to this delicate hovering between stoic acceptance and self-destruction, and as if she has willingly assumed this condition, understood by her as at once a limit and a possibility, a place to make a last stand in the quiet determination that there can be no more excesses, and that there is no more tolerance for the abuse that life so casually metes out.

Mike’s investigation, then, becomes an interrogation of two lives — of a life upon which the ultimate judgement has already been passed, and of one which is, increasingly, and increasingly harshly, being judged. If the narrative that Mike is constructing of her life, and if the identity she is assuming as her story advances, are haunted by disappointment and caustic self-condemnation,

it is because it is impossible for Mike not to compare the life still being lived by one woman with the life that had to be ended by another. From the moment Mike takes on the investigation, Jennifer becomes an ominous presence in her consciousness, insisting that her suicide will be relevant to whatever is to be discovered, that it has greater meanings that go beyond the ending of a single life, and that these meanings will have to be faced: “Now I feel that someone is inside of me, like an intruder, her flashlight playing. Jennifer Rockwell is inside of me, trying to reveal what I don’t want to see” (67). About what? About whom? It may be that Mike herself, with this ambiguous formulation, does not yet know what category of knowledge Jennifer’s life and death have to offer, but it soon takes the form of a verdict, by way of a comparison of the two lives, upon the quality and value of Mike’s own experience and existence. Trader’s gushing love letters to Jennifer (“the words a woman wants to hear,” 79) are contrasted with the billets-doux (“GET SOME TOILET PAPER FOR CHRIST SAKE,” 80) left in the kitchen for Mike; the effortless harmony represented by Trader and Jennifer, exemplified by the arrangement of their study (“The peer lover, ten feet away: Silence, endeavour, common cause. Isn’t that what we’re all supposed to want?,” 78), precedes, and surely generates, the withering conclusion by Mike on the couple formed by herself and Tobe (“half a ton of slob and slut,” 144); and Jennifer’s body (“a thrilling embarrassment,” 109) is the measure for Mike in dealing with the pleasureless experience of her own. Mike becomes less and less capable of thinking about her life and of constructing her identity within the limitations and possibilities set by her own existence; the life of this other woman, like a distorting mirror image, stands as an accusation and a verdict: “It’s not too late. I’m going to change my name. To something feminine. Like Detective Jennifer Hoolihan” (105). As the investigation slides towards “something absolutely sombre,” Mike’s darkening mood crystallizes into a self-flagellating direct comparison:

Astrophysics	Asset Forfeiture	
Trader	Tobe	
Colonel Tom	Pop	
Beautiful		(131-2)

How are we to read the meaning of this ominous, almost desolate blank space? At the symbolic level, as an absence revealing an emptiness in Mike’s existence, or as signifying an unspeakable truth about it? Or at a more literal level, as a confusion in Mike about her identity, or as an importunate question that cannot yet be — but that ultimately will have to be — answered? Mike’s investigation of Jennifer’s life has led her to the threshold of a conclusion about her own life and her own identity, a conclusion that is stalled as it awaits the word that cannot, or will not, be uttered.

Who is Mike Hoolihan, and what is the meaning of her life?

Early on in her investigation, this thought comes to Mike: “But she’s a cop’s daughter. This means something. This has to matter” (83).

After Jennifer’s funeral, Mike draws up a list of Stressors and Precipitants, the division of Jennifer’s life and experience into sources of potential significant stress, from which may have come the irresistible propellant towards suicide: Money?, Job?, Physical Health?, Trauma?, Childhood? The list goes on. There are, of course, the accumulating clues — the lithium, Arn Debs, and the rest — and there is the clinching proof of the suicide note, but none of these answers quite match up to the questions: the clues and the note conform to suicide patterns, but they don’t conform to *Jennifer’s* suicide. As her investigation ends, Mike strike’s off the last, lingering, inadequate questions on her Stressors and Precipitants list: “Now there’s nothing” (132). Mike has asked the right questions, but Jennifer’s life has given up the wrong answers.

And then Mike reads the following sentence highlighted by Jennifer among the banalities and platitudes of *Making Sense of Suicide*: “[V]irtually all known studies reveal that the suicidal person will give warnings and clues as to his, or her, suicidal intentions” (p. 134). Jennifer had certainly done that: “Clues. Jennifer left *clues*. She was the daughter of a police. That did matter”

(134). Now Mike understands the wrong answers:

She was the daughter of a police She knew that [her father] would follow her trail. And I believe she knew also that I would play a part in the search. . . . As she headed toward death she imprinted a pattern that she thought would solace the living. A pattern: Something often seen before. Jennifer left clues. But the clues were all blinds. (145)

Mike's investigation had uncovered a solution to the unbearable mystery of Jennifer's suicide. But her revisiting these clues now reveals it to be an elaborate and calculated faux solution, carefully concocted by Jennifer to leave the living with something they could live with: Jennifer knew her suicide would trigger the great anguished existential questioning, so she set about supplying an answer. But if this answer is *not* an answer, if the detection has led only to a false solution . . . then who was Jennifer Rockwell, and what is the meaning of her suicide?

Far from answering the questions about Jennifer's identity and existence, Mike's narrative has only deepened the enigma. And her account has even formulated another question about identity, this time concerning her own, but here too her narrative has stalled on a question, faltering in the face of the unnamable, or the ineffable.

Night Train's short last section deals with this unfinished business, but it deals with it in a manner that is true to the epistemological condition of its telling. As far as Mike's self-interrogation is concerned, it will not provide the missing, or unutterable, word; it *will* allow her to narrate herself to her own conclusion, and to act accordingly. But if this, in the unforeseen existential quest in the novel, does not assuage our anxieties or return us to order, neither does it withhold from us the evidence for well-founded apprehension.

But who *was* Jennifer Rockwell, and what is the meaning of her suicide? We might say that the detective set out to answer the first question, and the novel to investigate the second. Both fall silent at the moment of closure. The identity question, the detective's quest, was, on reflection, an impossible one, because the *a priori* assumptions informing the quest — about temporal and self

coherence, and about the unity, intention, and stability which ground and delimit the concept of personal identity — are so comprehensively sundered, so irrevocably negated, and are rendered so thoroughly irrelevant, by the finality, conviction, and sheer otherness of suicide. Intelligibility and coherence are precisely what Jennifer's suicide mocks and destroys. Identity seems a puny, fragile impostor in the wake of suicide's verdict.

The two questions are, in fact, one, a way of saying that the detective's quest to construct the victim's identity and the novel's teleological drive towards a solution are inseparable. The latter subsumes the former: if we know why Jennifer Rockwell killed herself we have a solution, in so far as we can re-interpret and re-inscribe her life, and construct for her an identity, within the context of the reason for her suicide: we will have an explanation, we will understand, and the novel will have both returned us to a form of order and assumed the responsibilities of its own teleology. But *Night Train* does not do this — it does not offer us a solution, it does not tell us why Jennifer killed herself. The detective and reader alike are left staring into the same metaphysical void, futilely sifting through the same inklings and intimations for something as concrete as a reason for the suicide. Jennifer's decision to kill herself seems close to being a gratuitous act, although it is a decision whose metaphysical context is her work as an astrophysicist: we learn that her staring into the vastness of the universe was never reduced for her to velocities, algorithms and pixels, but that she retained, rather, a romantic, entirely human wonder at the grandeur of the cosmos and the puniness of human striving. We are allowed to consider that the world — the human condition, with the “rat-race, turf-war, dog-eat-dog stuff we do all day” (93), as Jennifer's boss describes it — suddenly appeared impossibly vain and hollow to Jennifer, although this whispered speculation is not endorsed by the narrator. Suicide kills everybody — but does it also, in Jennifer's final gesture, deliver a verdict on the planet, on the entire human endeavour?

Night Train leaves the reader with these sombre metaphysical musings, an outcome that has not been appreciated by all its readers: the novelist Anita Brookner considers the narrative's quest for the truth as “an assault on the reader's good faith,”⁶ a serious, and wholly unfair, charge that smacks of a depressing conservatism and a failure, or an unwillingness, to appreciate the genre conventions within and against which Amis is writing. Amis has taken a genre whose tradition

and — for a long time — practice epitomized and enacted rational inquiry, the discovery of truth, a return to order, and a faith in the value of solution and closure, and he has confronted it with the enigma and incoherence of suicide; he has, in other words, deliberately and disinterestedly challenged the archetypal discourse of order by means of the ultimate human act of disorder and chaos. If *Night Train*, then, comes dressed up in these postmodern clothes, if it either refuses or fails to permit the detection to posit a solution in what appears to be a resolutely anti-detective mode, it is less that it consciously and ideologically wishes to do so than that it is obliged to remain true to the existential uncertainties and metaphysical anxieties that inhabit the act, and contemplation, of suicide.

Content and form in *Night Train*, in their resistance to solutions to questions about identity, are, indeed, in harmony. The novel's impressive weave of styles and idioms, tradition and innovation, homages and subversions, thwart simple categorization, and, in its breezy borrowings and multiple poses, *Night Train* confronts the reflective reader with the elusive, mutating, and unstable nature of identity. Who was Jennifer Rockwell? Who is Mike Hoolihan? As always in literature, we learn more from troubling questions than from facile answers.

¹ Martin Amis, *Night Train* (London: Cape, 1997) 4. All further quotations from the novel will be followed by a page-number reference in parentheses.

² The darkness, the particular brand of *noir*, on display in *Night Train* has not everywhere found a receptive audience. John Updike read *Night Train* as exemplifying what he sees as Amis's "writ[ing] out of a sensibility on the edge of the post-human." John Updike, *More Matter: Essays and Criticism* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1999) 364-5.

³ "Among ourselves, we would never say I am a policeman or I am a policewoman or I am a police officer. We would just say I am a police" (1).

⁴ He speaks in the memoir of the "fundamental trinity of significant suicides" which have

marked his life, including that of the mother of his eldest child. *Experience* (London: Cape, 2000) 226.

⁵ *Experience*, 281.

⁶ Brookner's comments appeared originally in her review of *Night Train* for *The Spectator* (27 September 1997), which is reproduced in *The Fiction of Martin Amis*, ed. by Nicolas Tredell (Cambridge: Icon, 2000) 175-76 (p. 175).