



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***FOUCAULDIAN TRANSGRESSION AS A MODE OF RESISTANCE IN  
SELECTED NOVELS BY MARTIN AMIS***

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SELECTED NOVELS BY MARTIN AMIS**

By

**MARWAN KADHIM MOHAMMED**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
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Doctor of Philosophy**

**August 2017**

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my late father, mother, wife, sons, brothers and sisters whose love, affection, encouragement and prays of day and night make me able to have success and honor.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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SELECTED NOVELS BY MARTIN AMIS**

By

**MARWAN KADHIM MOHAMMED**

**August 2017**

**Chairman : Associate Professor Wan Roselezam Wan Yahya, PhD**  
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Transgression is a complex construction which varies in definitions, meanings and techniques. It is a social and cultural expression, usually related to violation and deviation, presented nearly in all genres of ancient and present literature. Although the study of transgression is now vast and emerging, literature of transgression remains a blind spot and only a little concern is given to its dimensions of identity formation and resistance. Moreover, Martin Amis, as a postmodern English writer, is widely recognized as transgressive in his writings. His works are widely labeled with 'sexuality' and 'pornography' in the past researches. Thus, the present study examines the social transgression in Martin Amis' selected novels in terms of Michel Foucault's theory of Transgression. Accordingly, the first objective is to examine the aspects of transgression in Amis' selected novels by explaining the acts of crossing and going beyond *Limits* in order to liberate his discourse from labels of 'sexuality' and 'pornography'. The second objective is to explore the role of transgression in the creation of counter-discourses via examining the characters' *Problematization* of the common discourses that helps the characters to seek new definitions. The third objective is to explore the function of transgression as a mode of resistance in light of *Discontinuity* in the selected novels. The study is significant in the sense that it introduces a new perspective of reading social transgression in Amis' selected novels in an attempt to extend the definition and function of transgression in these novels. The contribution of the study lies in examining the non-traditional aspects of transgression which are essential in resisting common discourses and reconstituting subjectivity. Moreover, the study provides a valuable insight into how transgressive characters of the selected novels constitute themselves as resistant subjects out of the deeply- established norms of the society. Such trial may bridge the gap of the resistant dimension of transgression to provide a new perspective to transgressive literature in general and the selected novels in particular. The study conducted a detailed textual analysis of Amis' novels; *Money* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), *Time's Arrow* (1991), and *The Pregnant Widow* (2010). It concludes that social

transgression in Amis' novels is not a simple violation of rules but rather an intended strategy of resisting the common discourses for the sake of circulating new ones of identity reconstitution. It liberates Amis' characters from restraining definitions of the self and transforms them from 'alienated', 'lost-identity', subjugated' and 'silenced' into 'empowered', 'self-defined', 'liberated' and 'voiced' subjects. Finally, the study contributes to the understanding of Amis' transgressive style via clearing up the labels of 'sexuality' and 'pornography' from his creative writings. It also contributes to the understanding of the role of transgression as a mode of resistance to common discourses of the society.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**TRANSGERASI FOUCAULDIAN SEBAGAI MOD PENENTANGAN  
DALAM NOVEL TERPILIH MARTIN AMIS**

Oleh

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Transgerasi merupakan konstruksi kompleks yang berbeza dari segi definisi, makna, dan teknik. Ia merupakan ekspresi sosial dan budaya, biasanya berkaitan dengan pelanggaran dan penyimpangan yang dikemukakan dalam kebanyakan genre kesusasteraan kuno dan kini. Walaupun kajian mengenai transgerasi kini meluas dan bangkit muncul, kesusasteraan mengenai transgerasi masih merupakan tompok buta dan hanya sedikit perhatian diberikan pada dimensinya, seperti pembentukan dan penentangan identiti. Lebih-lebih lagi, Martin Amis, sebagai pengarang Inggeris pascamoden, merupakan tokoh yang dikenali sebagai transgresif dalam penulisan beliau. Karya beliau secara meluas telah dilabelkan dengan seksualiti dan pornografi dalam penyelidikan lepas. Oleh sebab itu, matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk meneliti transgerasi sosial dalam novel terpilih Martin Amis dari segi teori transgerasi Michel Foucault. Dengan itu, objektif pertama adalah untuk meneliti aspek transgerasi Amis dalam novel terpilih dengan menerangkan aksi merentasi dan melampaui batas supaya membebaskan wacana beliau daripada label seksualiti dan pornografi. Objektif kedua adalah untuk menyelidiki peranan transgerasi dalam pembentukan wacana balas karakter melalui penelitian permasalahan wacana umum yang membantu karakter mencari definisi baharu. Objektif ketiga adalah untuk menyelidiki fungsi transgerasi sebagai mod penentangan dari segi ketidaksinambungan dalam novel terpilih. Kajian ini adalah signifikan dari segi ia mengutarakan perspektif baharu dari segi pembacaan transgerasi sosial dalam novel terpilih Amis sebagai percubaan untuk memperluas definisi dan fungsi transgerasi dalam novel tersebut. Sumbangan kajian ini adalah dari segi meneliti aspek bukan tradisional transgerasi yang merupakan sesuatu yang penting bagaimana karakter transgerasi dalam novel terpilih tersebut membebaskan diri mereka sebagai subjek penentang yang terkeluar daripada norma masyarakat kekal lama. Percubaan tersebut diharap dapat merapatkan jurang dimensi penentangan transgerasi bagi memberikan perspektif baharu kepada kesusasteraan transgerasif secara umumnya dan pada novel terpilih secara khususnya. Kajian ini merupakan analisis yang

mendalam terhadap novel Amis; *Money* (1984), *London Fields* (1989) *Time's Arrow* (1991), dan *The pregnant Widow* (2010). Kesimpulan kajian ini menekankan bahawa transgerasi sosial dalam novel Amis bukan merupakan pelanggaran peraturan yang mudah tetapi merupakan strategi sengaja bagi menentang wacana umum untuk menyatakan apa sahaja bentuk pengedaran baharu konstitusi semula identiti. Ia membebaskan karakter Amis daripada mengawal semula definisi sendiri dan mentransformasikan mereka daripada subjek yang dikatakan renggang, hilang identiti, diketepikan dan senyap kepada subjek yang berkuasa, jelas diri, bebas dan bersuara. Akhirnya, kajian ini menyumbang kepada pemahaman tentang stail transgerasi Amis melalui penghapusan label seksualiti dan pornografi daripada penulisan kreatif beliau. Kajian ini juga menyumbang kepada pemahaman tentang peranan transgerasi sebagai mod penentangan pada wacana umum masyarakat.





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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 10 August 2017 to conduct the final examination of Marwan Kadhim Mohammed on his thesis entitled "Foucauldian Transgression as a Mode of Resistance in Selected Novels by Martin Amis" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*Perhaps [transgression] is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, which lights up the night from the inside, from top to bottom, yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation, its harrowing and poised singularity. (Foucault, 1977)*

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Society is created by boundaries and constraints that restrict culture and self alike. Transgression, as a key term of our life, seeks to go beyond these boundaries and constraints in order to release culture and let self finds itself. It is a complex construction which varies in definitions, meanings and techniques. It is a cultural expression in the sense that it is used to define human identity and existence. In this regards, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) refers to the importance of transgression to our life in general and to our thought in particular. He predicts that transgression would be a notable landmark for our future when he argues that transgression is a "decisive for our culture, as much a part of its soil, as the experience of contradiction was at an earlier time for dialectical thought" (1977,33).

However, transgression is recently recognized to be an omnipresent idea, presented nearly in all forms of ancient and present literature. Recognizing its rich field, scope, and cultural importance, scholars are drawn to this genre of human experiences. They have studied this essential field of knowledge historically, religiously, psychologically, socially, politically and recently literary. This field is related in one way or another to the human experiences which inspired and terrified people for ages since it is essentially related to human identity and existence. Furthermore, studying the genre of transgressive literature is now a vast and emerging field.

Themes written about transgression are not of a new invention and creation. Historically, ancient Greeks, Roman, Chinese, Indian, and Egyptian artifacts have shown paintings and sculptures depicting various sexual and erotic art and expressions indicated to be transgressive. Kama Sutra (1993), for example, is one of the oldest written works (200-400BCE) stated a spiritual discipline of sensual pleasures which includes aspects of family, pleasure, love, erotic and sexual transgression. Furthermore, such a vast and huge rendering of such a theme, in all these civilizations and cultures, implies its importance and value as a human

experience. This experience is valued and asserted as a social and cultural practice of transgression.

Western Judo-Christian theologies have traditionally depicted the idea of transgression as a matter of taboo related to some stories and views of Adam and Eve. The religious story of Adam and his eating of the forbidden apple from the tree of knowledge is of a great deal and concern in this respect as the first act of transgression.

In modern and contemporary eras, the concept of transgression goes a step further to open new horizons and dimensions for the human and cultural productions. Transgression is no longer a matter of purely a crossing over or violation of limits and laws, rather, it is a human and cultural production used to define human identity and existence. Transgression as a philosophy becomes an inspiring expression of the social and the cultural construct of individuals. It is a transformational portrayal of culture and society which depicts the cultural and social dimensions of people.

For Freud, the idea of transgression is strongly related to the taboo which is an important component of the civilized concept of conscience. Transgression and taboo, for Freud, illuminate the conscience by shading some lights on the origin and nature of this conscience. When the taboo is transgressed a sense of guilt is generated and such generation of guilt illuminates the conscience. This idea of illumination is asserted by Freud (1950) when he says that "the explanation of taboo also throws light on the nature and origins of conscience" (67-8). Freud goes on to relate taboo with conscience when he portrays the feeling after transgressing the taboo. Then, it is conceivable for Freud "to speak of taboo conscience or, after a taboo has been violated, of a taboo sense of guilt" (68). Accordingly, he goes further to assert that "taboo conscience is probably the earliest form in which the phenomenon of conscience is met with". Consequently, Freud shows that taboo is a remarkable idea that the conscience is known with when he asserts that "in some languages the words for 'conscience' and 'consciousness' can scarcely be distinguished" (68).

Another modern idea of transgression is explained by Michael Silverblatt when he addresses the genre of transgressive literature in his essay under the title *Shock Appeal: Who Are These Writers and Why Do They Want to Hurt us?* (1993). According to Silverblatt, who is the first to coin the term of 'transgressive fiction', transgression is defined as "a literary genre that graphically explores such topics as incest and other aberrant sexual practices" (McCracken,2016,11). Silverblatt argues that these topics are to be tackled in the transgressive fiction on the base of knowledge which is the "edge of experience and body" which is "the site for gaining knowledge" (11). Ann H. Soukhanove gives another perception of transgression as she suggests that transgressive fiction is related to those narratives which portray "mutilation, the sprouting of sexual organs in various places on the human body, urban violence and violence against women, drug use, and highly dysfunctional family relationships" (11). In such a sense, transgressive fiction shares similarities

with fictions of erotic, noir and splatter punk in its ability to depict illegal practices and stun readers. Consequently, the transgressive fiction is, up to date, a controversial idea and many of its pioneers have been subjected to trials of obscenity. William S. Burroughs, Hubert Selby Jr., and D.H Lawrence are remarkable examples of this sense as they were famous objects of such trials of obscenity. Also, such controversy is a remarkable indication that the notion of transgression is a flourishing one.

Furthermore, the notion of transgression is emerged as a notable genre since the 1990s with the writings of Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991), Helen Zahavi's *Dirty Weekend* (1991), Dennis Cooper's *George Miles Cycle* (Closer/ Frisk/ Try/ Guide/ and Period) (1992), Will Self's *Cock and Bull* (1992) and A. M. Homes's *The End of Alice* (1996). Also, the idea of transgression gets a notable attention with Graham Caveney and Elizabeth Young's collection *Shopping in Space: Essays on America's Blank Generation Fiction* (1994) which offers a critical analysis of the reasons behind such transgressive texts. More recently, Robin Mookerjee's *Transgressive Fiction: The New Satiric Tradition* (2013) discusses the transgressive fiction as a social commentary while Keith Booker's *Techniques of Subversion in Modern Literature: Transgression, Abjection, and the Carnavalesque* (1991) outlines such transgression as a technique, rather than a basis of literary genre.

Moreover, the recent framings of transgression move on into new different fields of study. Some recent studies have considered that transgression casts its shadow on the personal identity and therefore affects it in a way or another. These modern approaches consider transgression as a force able to frame and affect identity. Accordingly, Thomas Waugh exposed in his study *The Romance of Transgression in Canada* (2006) the ways by which the subject's social identity is constructed. Moreover, the study is a historical and cultural contextualization of the transgressive conflict for cultural representation and visibility. Transgression is concluded to be a crucial site in which the social and cultural representations are framed and constructed. Thus, transgression as a philosophy takes new definition and function as it is socially and culturally reconstructed to be a source of struggle and power.

Chris Jenks in his book entitled *Transgression Key Ideas* (2003) shows transgression as not a matter of an easy exceeding or a simple crossing of borders, and it "does not deny limits or boundaries rather it [...] completes them" (7). For Jenks, transgression is a matter of completion since it "is a component of rules" (7) and each one of these rules "carries with it its own fracture, penetration or impulse to disobey". Hence, transgression is not perceived as a simple overtaking or crossing limits; instead, it is a process of "dynamic force in cultural reproduction" (95). Furthermore, such force is taken to be a sharp weapon for breaking rules and in this respect, Jenks assures that "it prevents stagnation by breaking the rule and it ensures stability by reaffirming the rule" (7). For that purpose, Jenks asserts that it "is not the same as disorder; it opens up chaos and reminds us of the necessity of order" (2).

However, the present study rests on the viewpoint that argues transgression as one of the most important ideas of modernity. Foucault points it out to be more than a simple desire of going beyond and violating social limits and boundaries. Such process of transgression becomes a fashion of the age people keen to do within their course of life to assert certain purposes and ideas which of most important are identity and existence.

Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate Martin Amis' selected novels in terms of Foucauldian theory of transgression in an attempt to find a new space and function for transgression. Indeed, transgression is widely tackled before but the new contribution of the present study goes in giving a new insight and reading of the concept portrayed by Amis in lights of Foucault's theory and conceptualization. The new and unusual postmodern portrayal of Amis' transgressive characters is the crucial idea behind choosing him for this study. His protagonists John Self of *Money* (1984), Odilo Unverdorben of *Time's Arrow: or The Nature of the Offence* (1991), Xan Meo of *Yellow Dog* (2003), Lev of *the House of Meetings* (2006), Keith Nearing, his girlfriend Lily and her friend Scheherazade of *The Pregnant Widow* (2010) and many other characters have been created in a different and unusual way to convey Amis' transgressive viewpoint of the postmodern age in a critical framework. Although this transgressive view has been expressed previously by the 19th-century Russian writer Alexander Herzen but Amis echoed it in a different way of presentation. Amis' viewpoint is expressed in his 2007 interview with *Independent* when he answered questions about misogyny stating that the Feminist movement is incomplete and bewildering for women. Amis even quotes Herzen's words to state that this movement is "a long night of chaos and desolation" (Herzen, 1979, 124). To avoid this chaos, Amis (2007) calls for a new framing of the age stating that "consciousness is not revolutionized by the snap of a finger. And feminism, I reckon, is about halfway through its second trimester".

Hence, Amis' protagonists are created and enhanced with their great desires of transgression to move forward into their journeys over the world to find a new meaning and a clear definition of their destabilized identities. During their journeys, those protagonists come to transgress the normality of the order and the social tradition. Transgression is their sharp tool which they use to go forward to seek their identity and the truth of themselves. John Self, for example, the protagonist of *Money* (1984) is depicted to be a new archetypal model of modern chaos and desolation that lives only to transgress the social norms. His continual transgression leads him to lose everything even his father's name in order to win a new identity.

Anyway, the contribution of the present study goes to tackle some of Amis' characters in lights of Michel Foucault's conception and theory of transgression. This theory shows creatively Amis' creation of new identities which were able to go beyond limits and boundaries imposed on them. Such creation is made by adopting new strategies of transforming destabilized subjects into new self-identified subjects. Transgression, as a prominent strategy of transformation, is manipulated to change these subjects into new identities. In the Foucauldian theory of transgression, these



subjects are able to do such transformation once received the reins of power. This sense of power is obtained only through liberating self by crossing limits imposed. Thus, going beyond imposed limitations is the only way for empowerment. Limits should be questioned and investigated to be transgressed for the sake of getting such sense of power. Foucault calls for questioning everything even those limits deeply settled and inherited since ancient times in an attempt to get power of liberating self. With such questioning and investigation subjects are going to pass and transgress the borders of what they had before as a limit or taboo. As a result, transgression gives this sense of power that allows self-liberation from the imposed restrictions. Miller (1993) argues that transgression for Foucault is "a will to power" (197) which displaces and creates new self-defined subjects capable of resisting the limits imposed.

Most importantly, the contribution of this study argues that the transgressive literature in Amis' novels comes to be a mode of resistant literature. The resistant identity can be derived by adopting the Foucauldian philosophy of transgression on some of Amis' novelistic characters. Transgression, in Foucauldian terms, is not only a suitable site of subject's emergence but also, it is the only way of that emergence. For Foucault, subjectivity historically constituted itself through different discourses and models of economic, religious, ethical, linguistic, moral, social and linguistic practices. And it is only through crossing any one of these models or discourses (boundaries) that the individual becomes conscious of his/her own subjectivity. Then, transgression is indispensable for subjects to be emerged and actualized. (Strozier, 2002).

To sum up, the contemporary reading of transgression oversees new prospects of portrayals and functions. It comes into certain that the transgressive literature is no longer a fixed and stereotypical subject; rather, it is a cultural manifestation of a variable reality in which human identity and existence are widely recognized. Accordingly, the contribution of the present study argues that the Foucauldian theory of transgression can be used in Martin Amis' selected novels to reveal both a mode of subjectivity formation and a mode of resistance. The remarkable infamies of the 20th century are thematic implications and issues, Amis displayed in his novels, to show their effects on self and life. Themes like Thatcherism and Britain's monetary policy and the social impact of money as in the novel *Money* (1984), war catastrophes and world's development of nuclear weapons as in *London Fields* (1989), the threat of nuclear war and the Holocaust as in *Time's Arrow* (1991), sexuality and eroticism in *The Pregnant Widow* (2010) are Amis' main concerns represented through his new portrayal of transgressive characters in an attempt to indicate a new critical mode of opposition and resistance.

Furthermore, this study addresses the social transgression in four novels of Amis in terms of Foucauldian philosophy and theory of transgression. The transgression in Amis' novels falls into various types such as erotic, political, religious, moral, literary and social. The social transgression is chosen as a subject matter of this study for different purposes. (a) The studies of social issues are core areas of human concern

since it is associated to human character and existence. (b) Whatever the number of the studies adopted to this field of study it cannot cover the huge importance of the social subjects because of its various and manifold nature. (c) Although the social matters are widely emphasized by Amis himself, we hardly find any research deals with this subject in terms of Foucault's theory. (d) Also in all of these types of transgression there's something that may link them together, in a way or another it is a social element. Moreover, Amis' society has passed through many historical, social and political changes. These changes affected the writings of the age in a way that they directed the norms and traditions of that age. The present study emphasizes in particular the way Amis reflects this rich period of the age, making full use of Foucault's philosophical theory of transgression. The present study argues that the transgression in Amis' selected novels is directed against the social norms of the age to assert a new novelistic mode of resistance that the writer adopted in his attempt to show the spirit of the age. The tone of chaos, dystopia and desolation questions the social modern self and the social identity in such corrupted conditions of the age.

### 1.1.1 Transgression and Definitions

The definition of Transgression is somehow culturally problematic in the sense that it is closely related to some complicated strategies of cultural productions especially those in touch with identity and society. Transgression, etymologically, is characterized as the procedure of 'crossing over' that moves from a rational condition of order into irrational condition of disorder. In such doing, the act of transgression is that kind of action which passes over or goes beyond the law whether it is civilian or moral. The idea of transgression is omnipresent at all times and in all societies and cultures. What is notable about this idea is not only it is omnipresent but also it is a flourishing one. In such a sense of flourishing, one could refer to the literary scene in which D.H. Lawrence's novel *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), Edward Bond's play *Saved* (1964) and Howard Breton's play *The Romans in Britain* (1980), for examples, were put under the imposed censorship for many years. Such censorship may give a brief account of taboos imposed on literature as a transgressive phenomenon of expression. Besides, the idea of flourishing transgression is indicated in all terms and aspects of life. In the political fields, for example, the argumentative debate of themes such as the Holocaust is an enough reference to the refreshing and flourishing nature of transgression. This idea of transgression is still persuasive to indicate the cultural and social struggle of transgression.

The idea of transgression, in a way or another, is related to the idea of taboo which could be turned back to the early beginnings of the mankind. In this sense, the Judo-Christian tradition of taboo and transgression indicates the biblical story of Adam's transgression. Such a story is a brief account of Adam's perception of transgression of the sacred boundaries on his conquest of knowledge. Eating the forbidden apple from the tree of knowledge is the first famous idea of transgression man asserted .

According to Thody (1997), the idea of transgression is defined as "the oldest unwritten code" (312). Thody assures that the idea "given by most anthropologists is

the incest taboo" and that taboo and transgression are much more essential indications of our humankind than "the development of language, the use of tools, or the obligation we feel to care for the old and the infirm" (312).

Furthermore, most of the contemporary opinions about transgression show that there is such an essential transformation in the way of framing and understanding the meaning of the concept. Such a shift in meaning is done to serve certain modern purposes of the modern man by fabricating new ways and techniques of defining self. The new ways of producing and marketing such a concept are completely different from that old ones. The philosophy of transgression becomes a cultural production used to open new arenas of new forms of rejection and opposition. So, the contemporary view of this genre is changed to indicate a new frame of making, reading and understanding of the philosophy of transgression. This transformational shift in meaning and production can easily be caught via the questions and solutions suggested by the cultural studies dealing with the genre of transgressive literature and field of transgression. The contemporary vision of this genre implies that transgression is no longer a pure expression of crossing over or violation. However; it is social and cultural production that expresses identity and existence.

In consulting the existing references and dictionaries on this concept of transgression, one is going to be struck by the simplicity scholars have encountered in framing the real meaning of transgression. Merriam Webster (1983) defines transgression as: "(a): infringement or violation of a law, command, or duty, (b): the spread of the sea over land areas and the consequent unconformable deposit of sediments on older rocks" (830). Oxford Dictionary (2006) gives the definition of "an act that goes beyond the limits of what is morally or legally acceptable" (1886). In examining these definitions one can recognize that transgression is only related to the idea of infringement, penetration, violation, and going against law and duty. Besides, these definitions do not present anything more like that of the mode or sense of resistance that the concept of transgression may imply as a cause or effect of that violation .

The contribution of the present study argues that there is such a close relationship and attachment between the idea of violation and the ideas of identity formation and resistance. This close attachment is outlined by theorists like the Marquis de Sade, Nietzsche, Georges Bataille, and Michel Foucault who, later on, builds his own theory of transgression on this base of argument. However, there is hardly any dictionary refers notably to that kind of attachment although; there is a wide assertion of that kind of relationship promoted by the theorists and philosophers mentioned above.

In the late 18th century, the Marquis de Sade indicated the importance of transgression stating that such concept plays a definite role in crossing boundaries. The process of crossing was oriented towards going beyond the moral and social laws to reach the civil life. Furthermore, this kind of going was usually related to

sexual and erotic practices to reject the social normality of order. Sade argued that such kind of writings should go along with the liberated principles of the French Revolution. Sade's book *Philosophy of the Bedroom* (2002), which asserts a prominent link between transgression and sexuality, is taken to be the base of the philosophy of transgression in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Nietzsche shows that the idea of transgression emerges from the major Greek idea of human existence. The myth of contradiction of Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus is central in the philosophy transgression. For Nietzsche, it might be said that transgression stems from the struggle between the realm of rationality and limits (Apollo) and the realm of flux and chaos (Dionysus). Such a conflict of Apollo/Dionysus which is also represented with the dichotomy of Nature/Culture opposition is the real important record of the Western art in which transgression is characterized. According to Nietzsche, in all previous history, this fundamental debate and the various reactions to it constitutes the raw material of Western art. He argues that everyone personifies "a compound of nature and culture, chaos and order, instinct and reason... symbolized by Dionysus and Apollo" (Foucault, 1977, 45). Leaning on this idea of Apollo/Dionysus conflict, Foucault plays his own argument to expose his philosophy of transgression. Besides, the idea is taken to be a central issue to Foucault to explore his notes and arguments on Enlightenment of 19th Century. In this respect, Foucault's arguments refer to the imperfection of Enlightenment because of its appreciation of the Apollonian reason on the expense of the Dionysian chaotic flux which is delimited. According to Foucault, such disparity affects the individual on the terms of subjectivity and identity constructions (1977).

Before Foucault's theory of transgression comes into light, Georges Bataille (1983) outlined his own philosophy of transgression. Bataillan philosophy of transgression pays a lot of concern to the idea of Sade's sexuality and eroticism. Bataille's definition of transgression exceeds the limits of the usual frameworks. Transgression, according to Bataille, the author of *The History of Eroticism* (1993), is a key feature that distinguishes man from other creatures like animals. Bataille's implications of transgression stem from the Sadean philosophy of sexuality and eroticism. He identifies that transgression is strongly related to eroticism which cannot be revealed without transgression. Therefore, Bataille (1993) emphasized "the true nature of the erotic stimulant [which] can only be revealed by literary means, by bringing into play characters and scenes from the realm of the impossible" (177).

Furthermore, Bataille indicated that literature is a realm of creation and not merely a reflection or imitation of what had been recognized before. This indication was justified by his emphasis on the 'literary means' that push literature forward to transgress and go beyond limits. According to Bataille (1993), these literary means are so important since they can do what one cannot do in the ordinary language. Therefore, he concluded that transgression is a process of going beyond limits with these means in an erotic realm.



Foucault's conceptualization of transgression stems from all these definitions with a notable addition to the concept itself. This addition and implication of all these previous definitions besides other reasons related to limits, subjectivity, and self-construction and resistance are the main reasons behind choosing Foucault's theory of transgression in this study. Such prominent addition and implication of the concept are going to be addressed in the next section.

### 1.1.2 Michel Foucault's conception of Transgression

The notion of transgression and social boundaries is one of the most important pillars of Foucault's philosophy and is omnipresent in all of his work. His article titled *A Preface to Transgression* (1977) deeply discusses his philosophy of transgression. Foucault conceptualizes his own philosophy of transgression which is tended to resist the traditional way of understanding the language and the discourse of philosophy. In this respect, Foucault predicted his speculations of the future of transgression when he declared that "perhaps one day it [transgression] will seem as decisive for our culture, as much a part of its soil, as the experience of contradiction was at an earlier time for dialectical thought" (1977, 33). Foucault went ahead to indicate that the language, almost entirely in the future, would create its space and being in transgression.

The notion of transgression is not a new one, but what is remarkable about Foucault is that he philosophically conceptualizes it as much as that of Bataille's indications of the transgressive language in the fictions and writings of André Gide, Thomas Mann, the Marquis de Sade, Baudelaire and Nietzsche. Transgression, according to Foucault, is neither a simple violation of existing values or limits nor an assertion for new limits and boundaries. Rather, transgression is a 'contestation' of the universals and constants which impose and frame limits and boundaries. In this context, Foucault (1977) agrees with Blanchot's definition and conception of contestation. As a "radical break of transitivity", contestation goes on to question everything "until one reaches the empty core where being achieves its limit and where the limit defines being" (36). Thus, this contestation leads to a remarkable definition of beings. For this reason, transgression as a 'contestation' asserts the Foucauldian idea of inevitability and importance of actualizing identity throughout transgression. Such definition approves Foucault's total agreement with Nietzschean notes of transgression which implied as a necessary going towards "the transgressed limit, the 'yes' of contestation reverberates, leaving without echo the hee-haw of Nietzsche's braying ass" (35). In this regard, Foucault frames his transgression with the idea of contestation that leads to an experience of power to question the established universals and constants.

Besides, Foucault points out the inseparability of transgression with limit, taboo, prohibition and law. This close relation of limit and transgression is addressed in his explanation of their mutual relation stating that they "depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess" (34). He goes even further to indicate that "a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable". Accordingly, for Foucault

the transgression is not a simple crossing over or violation; rather it's a crucial term. For this reason, Foucault notes that "transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows" (34).

Likewise, Foucault calls for that kind of transgression which breaks taboos and prohibitions stating that such transgression should not be theatrics. To do so, Foucault explains that transgression should be given a meaning. His preferred meaning is that transgression is not a simple crossing over limits but rather, it is a matter of 'contestation' in which universals and constants are subverted. The demonstration of the act of transgression is explicitly increased whenever the act of restriction is established and imposed. In this regard, he exemplified that transgression was widely spread throughout history as far as the same-sex erotic was outlawed. According to Sedgwick (1990), Sadean philosophy of *Literature of Closet* is rapidly increased in the 19th century with the prohibitions of sodomy and homosexuality. In this regard, fictions of Herman Melville, Henry James, Oscar Wilde and Marcel Proust are good examples of the rise of such themes in society.

Although, he did not say too much about the sexual identity, Foucault referred strongly to the bond of transgression with sexuality. Like Sade and Bataille, Foucault recognized the close relationship of transgression with sexuality throughout his essay *A Preface to Transgression* (1977). Accordingly, sexuality is widely discussed but with no clear indications to the specified gender involved. References to a distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, for example, have not been implied. Such lack of gender's specification refers to the general idea in which transgression involves sexuality regardless the gender of the partner. Specification of gender in such relationship of transgression and sexuality may be a secondary or irrelevant. In this respect, Foucault highlights, instead, eroticism to be inextricable from transgression rather than the common sex. Eroticism, therefore, is bound up with transgression since it is defined as violation of normality and rules. Such violation serves the purpose of eroticism by transgressing the cultural prohibitions.

Furthermore, Transgression, for Foucault, is indispensable in subject's construction and definition. Subjectivity, according to him, emerges from the idea of transgression. His contribution, in this respect, argues that the individual subjectivity is constituted itself throughout history by adopting different techniques and models of social, linguistic, financial, moral, religious, and ethical practices. And, the individual becomes aware of his/her subjectivity only when he/she exceeds any of these models (limits). Consequently, transgression is indispensable for subjectivity formation and without which, individual will not be able to actualize himself as a subject. This emerged subjectivity needs to be defined and such definition comes into surface throughout a continual transgression. The subject is defined throughout that kind of transgression. Further, this definition is made possible through procedure of "construction/deconstruction" or through a division of the individual (or self) from the (other), also alluded to as the self/other dichotomy.

Additionally, Foucault (1977) relates the idea of transgression with that of intensity which is, he explained, implied there in the meaning of transgression. Thus, transgression is essentially related to that idea of intensity and such kind of relation leads to a new product of transgression known to be a direct result of that intensity. Foucault (1977) refers to that kind of relation saying that "transgression is like a flash of lightning in the night which, from the beginning of time, gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies" (35). He also argued that within the history of sexuality, a lot of discursive transgression had been increasingly developed on the theme of sexuality after the strict and intensive treatment imposed over the theme in the seventeenth century.

On the personal level, transgression is such a major idea of pleasure for Foucault who is fond of limitation. In his meeting with Stephen Riggins in *Lawrence D. Krizman* (1988), Foucault argues that "I'm not able to give myself and others those middle-range pleasures that make up everyday life. Such pleasures are nothing for me and I'm not able to organize my life in order to make place for them" (123). The pleasure, he looks for "must be something incredibly intense...Some drugs are really important for me because they are the mediation to those incredibly intense joys that I am looking for" (127).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The study of transgression is now vast and emerging, and there are a lot of scientific studies and scholarly researches written on this genre of literature. Transgression is a complex construction which varies in definitions, meanings and techniques. It is a cultural expression presented nearly in all forms of ancient and present literature. Recognizing its rich field, scope, and cultural importance, scholars are drawn to this genre of human experiences. Many scholars and academic figures have studied and written about this essential field of study: historically, religiously, scholarly, socially and literary. This field is related in a way or another to the human experiences which inspired and terrified people for ages since it is essentially related to human life and existence. However, there is only a little concern and interest given to its dimensions of resistance and identity formation.

Studying transgression as a mode of resistance in literature is a major issue because it is associated in particular with human existence. Yet, little attention and concern is given to the study of this theme especially in the novels of the contemporary English novelist Martin Amis. Besides, there is hardly any research, so far, analyzing the transgressive implications of Martin Amis' novels in terms of Foucauldian philosophy and theory of transgression. This lack of attention can be attributed to the sensitivity of the subject of transgression and the abundance of sex manipulated in these novels. The abundance of the theme of sex being the most prominent theme of these novels covered all other subjects. Thus, these novels have widely been discussed and dealt with as a social satire and critique. Further, Amis' novels have been the subject of research in a lot of studies grouped within themes of politics, sex, pornography, history and calamities of modern man. Gavin Keulks in his book

*Father and Son* (2003), for example, asserts a lot of interest to transgression in Amis' novels. However, his study lacks the critical perspective of transgression as a mode of resistance as employed in the current study. This perspective addresses the aspects of transgression to be put under analysis for the purpose of searching the idea beyond using such transgression. It is very important perspective since it provides a new reading and understanding of the issues Amis discussed. Moreover, finding out a new perspective to Amis' transgressive novels enables the reader to know something about the agenda Amis adopted and meant to use as a matter of protest against modern human's bad conditions and situations. This, in turn, will provide a new reading and function for transgression in general and Amis' transgressive novels in particular away from the traditional look that reads transgression as a mere deviation and violation of norms. In such doing the study contributes to the understanding of the non-traditional aspects of transgression. It is not a mere violation of social limits; rather it can be viewed as a technical procedure in resisting common discourses. Amis' transgressive novels are differently recognized to be a means of protest and resistance against many of the prevailing issues which are humiliating the contemporary man.

Moreover, transgression is not fully taken into account in the process of subject's identity constructions in Amis' selected novels. Hardly any research is done to deal with Amis' novels in light of Foucault's perception of transgression. Brian Finney in his book *English Fiction Since 1984: Narrating a Nation* (2006) showed the importance of transgression in performing Amis' characters. However, Finney's study didn't find the way of articulating Amis' characters in light of Foucault's theory of transgression. As such, the current study incorporates Amis' transgression in subverting the grand narratives of society for the restructure of identity. The contribution of the present study addresses the importance of transgression as a vital means in reconstructing identity and actualizing self. The study traces the formation of subjectivity in Amis' selected novels to see how some of their characters constitute themselves as self-defined individuals. Thus, the study would contribute to articulate transgression as an approach to re-signify meanings via creating counter-discourses that transform the passive and powerless agents into active and powerful ones.

However, Amis' discourses of resistance and identity reconstruction have not been studied through Foucault's perceptions of transgression. Instead of going with Keulks' harsh criticism of Amis, or reading Amis' novels within the framework of sexuality attributed by Finney, the present study will go through the analysis of transgression in light of Foucault's concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*. These concepts have the function of deconstructing the common discourses to help in creation of new spaces to the articulation of new system that turns individual into active and powerful, and thus it helps in the structure of identity formation.

More importantly, Past research widely labeled Amis' works with 'sexuality' and 'pornography' (Parker 2006). There is a very little concern given to the idea of transgression in Amis' novels, from one hand and, and there is hardly any study, up



to now, adopting Foucault's theory of transgression through the amalgamation of the concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization*, and *Discontinuity* to Amis' selected novels from the other hand. The contribution of the present study is an attempt to bridge such a gap by collecting Amis and Foucault together in one study to shed light on transgression as a mode of resistance and identity reconstruction. Such contribution may reveal suggestions in the studied texts for the ways in which transgression might be a good critique of a new reading of Amis for a better understanding in terms of these concepts.

### 1.3 Objectives of the Study

The present study deals with the social transgression in Martin Amis' selected novels in light of Michel Foucault's theory of transgression. It seeks to explore a new space and function for the transgressive literature by tracing the concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity* used in such a genre of literature. Transgressive novel can be accomplished as a literature of resistance if it is intentionally used to rebel against the traditional norms and the power imposed and this rebellion is decisive in identity reconstruction. Thus, the first objective of the study is to examine the aspects of transgression in Amis' selected novels by explaining the acts of crossing and going beyond limits to liberate Amis' discourses from labels of sexuality and pornography attributed to him. In order to achieve this objective, I explore the representations of *Limit* and its role in subverting the social system to see how such a limit is manipulated to define the aspects of transgression used in the selected novels.

The second objective of the current study is to explore the role of transgression in the creation of counter-discourses via examining the characters' Problematization of the common discourses that help the characters to seek new definitions for themselves. Problematization is not only a critical thinking, but also a strategic process of de-familiarization in which common sense is considered. Moreover, the main objective of this process is not only to raise suspicion and questions about old discourses, but also to create new discourses of confrontation to serve the process of framing self-identity. This objective is going to be achieved through tracing Foucault's concept of *Problematization* in the selected novels to examine its role and significance in shaping discourses that frame subjectivity.

Finally, the third objective is to explore the function of transgression as a mode of resistance in the selected novels. To achieve this, representation of transgression is investigated in light of Foucault's concept of *Discontinuity* which is used to break the conventional established-norms of society. Accordingly, the representation of transgression in terms of Foucault's conception of *Discontinuity* will be investigated to show that this transgression is a clear manifestation of discontinuity to the established standards of society. Hence, transgressive literature is socially organized to be oriented towards certain traditional norms through certain discourses that may be derived by the literature of transgression and the most important is the discourse of resistance. Consequently, articulating transgression as an approach in light of

these three concepts would re-signify meanings via creating counter-discourses that transform the passive and powerless agents into active and powerful ones with new subjectivity.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

Keeping in mind the previously mentioned objectives, the current study intends to find answers to the following questions:

- How are the aspects of transgression reflected in Amis' selected novels? How can Foucault's concept of *Limit* liberate Amis' discourse from labels and frames?
- How does transgression manifest itself as a strategic means of constructing counter-discourses in light of Foucault's concept of *Problematization*? How does *Problematization* help the characters in the selected novels free themselves from the established definitions and seek new ones?
- How can transgression be employed as a mode of resistance to the common discourses in Amis' selected novels via Foucault's concept of *Discontinuity*? How can *Discontinuity* work hand in hand with *Limit* and *Problematization* to create new subjects in the selected texts?

#### 1.5 Significance of the Study

The subject of transgression is widely studied in various fields of social sciences. In the field of literature, studies on transgression as a human issue and concern are core areas of research. The present study would be significant and important since it deals with transgression as a human issue and concern. Transgression is an unpredictable development which differs in definitions, implications and strategies. It is a social expression displayed almost in all types of old and presents literature. Recognizing its rich field, scope and cultural significance, scholars are drawn to this genre of human experiences. However, neither the resistance dimension of transgression nor that of identity formation has been fully taken into account in studying this field of knowledge. Accordingly, the study would create a new awareness and realization to the meanings and implications of transgression and its usage in terms of identity reformation and resistance. In such doing, the study widens the academic research on theorizations of transgression as an area of empowerment and identity reformation.

Furthermore, the contribution of this study would introduce a new perspective to the restructuring of transgressive literature in Martin Amis' selected novels in lights of Foucauldian theory of Transgression. It goes even a step further to seek new strategies used to create and frame the transgressive characters by tracing the thematic purposes and the intentional targets stated beyond the use of some techniques of transgression. In such doing, the study would introduces a new reading to the transgressive techniques employed by Amis to clear up the labels of sexuality and pornography attributed to him. Consequently, exploring the transgressive

characters and their quest for subjectivity in Amis' novels will enrich the scholarship on these fictions.

### **1.5.1 Significance of the Study in Regard to Transgression**

It seems that a lot of studies that deal with transgression are merely preoccupied with personal themes that investigate the private affairs of the family rather than larger social issues. The present study intends to deal with the social transgression in its large scope with the Foucauldian conceptions of *Limit*, *Problematization*, and *Discontinuity* to explore its great deal of effect on the subjects. Studying the social aspects of transgression in Amis' novels would contribute to serve many areas of knowledge: literature, sociology, and sexuality to provide a bridge between them. These areas are the main issues and concerns of literature as a field that pays a great deal to human issues. My study would contribute to this scope by opening new prospect to the literary studies for a new understanding of transgression and its function in literature .

Moreover, the contribution of the study would, also, give a new meaning of understanding to transgression in terms of resistance to explore suggestions in the texts of ways in which transgression might be resistant or be made a resistant. This contribution would widen academic research on theorizations of transgression as an area of empowerment and give a new reading of Martin Amis' novels through Foucault's theory to understand his tone of resistance.

### **1.5.2 Significance of the Study in Regard to Martin Amis' novels**

There are a lot of studies that deal with Martin Amis' novels; however, there is hardly any research, so far, analyzing the transgression in these novels in terms of Foucault's theory of transgression. Besides, Amis' novels are usually taken to be erotically tackled and discussed in many studies but most, if not all of them, lack both perspectives of identity formation and resistance performance which this study would employ. Past research widely labeled Amis's works with 'sexuality' and 'pornography' (Parker 2006). Thus, the contribution of this study would give a new reading of Amis' novels in accordance to Foucault's theory of transgression. It shows that Amis is not a purely sexual or even a pornographer novelist, but rather he is an anti-authoritarian writer. He creates and uses such new transgressive discourses to show and convey his critical opinions and touches. Furthermore, new meanings for transgression and transgressive literature are conducted in this study to enrich the knowledge of the selected novels. The adoption of transgressive language and characters is critically manipulated to convey the novelist's critical touches of protest and opposition of the dominant discourses imposed on individuals. Therefore, the contribution of this study would be of a good interest to scholars and readers of literature alike to adopt a new perspective of reading to enrich their understandings of Amis' real intentions and purposes of the transgression employed.

Eventually, the contribution of the present study would help give a careful investigation of transgressive literature that can provide valuable insight into how transgressors constitute themselves as subjects. Moreover, the study tries to give a new reading of transgression in an attempt to brighten the dark side of the critical and resistant meanings of transgression. Such trial may bridge the gap of the critical and resistant dimensions of transgression to provide a new perspective to its readers.

## 1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The current study is conducted within the framework of the social theory of self-actualization in which theories of subjectivity reconstruction have been utilized to study the topic of identity. The study focuses on the restructuring of identity which is selected in Martin Amis' novels with respect to Michel Foucault's hypothesis and theory of transgression. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, my observation to the articulation of transgression in Amis's selected novels is done in light of Foucault's theory of transgression. The English novelist Martin Amis is chosen in the current study for three main reasons. Firstly, Amis is widely recognized as a satirist, sexist and pornographer writer. His critical techniques and impressions of resistance or identity formation have not been taken into account. Secondly, transgression in Amis' novels is usually taken in terms of his sexual and pornographic depiction. The present study creates a new perspective to Amis' transgression as it looks to it from a different angle. Amis' transgression is not only a theme in literature but rather, an approach of life and a style of thinking for the protagonists of his novels. Finally, the studies done on Amis' novels in the light of Foucault's theory and concept of transgression are hardly found. In this sense, the current study may bridge this gap in literary studies about Amis.

The present study would be limited to the study of the transgressive characters in Amis' novels *Money* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), *Time's Arrow* (1991) and *The Pregnant Widow* (2010) in terms of the Foucauldian theory of transgression and his conceptions of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*. The acts of transgression will be textually analyzed to examine their role in the articulation of new subjectivity in the selected novels. The selection of these novels covers the period (1984-2010) as it is Amis's evolutionary time of writing creative and transgressive novels. Such a selection depends on the novels' reliability and relevance to the topic of the study. The selected texts fit the topic since they manipulate transgression as a critical theme and approach of resistance and identity formation. Although the characters of these novels are from different societies and historical background, they all suggest that transgression is not a simple phenomenon of violation but rather a sharp strategy of identity formation and resistance. Simultaneously, the concepts are taken to be applied to the selected novels since they create a new awareness and realization to the meanings and implications of their usage. The transgressive touches of the characters Amis used in his novels suggest a new meaning of identity formation and resistance.



Furthermore, transgression could be moral, religious, historical, political, linguistic or even social. The current study would be limited to the focus on the social aspects of transgression in Amis' selected novels for reasons of importance and existence. Other aspects of transgression will not be included in the primary concern of the study. Also, themes like Feminism and queer theory are not a concern of the present study.

## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

Michel Foucault's philosophy and theory of transgression is the theoretical framework of the current study which aims to explore the role of transgression in performing the subjectivity of individuals and in resisting the circulated discourses of the social norms. The study investigates the role articulated by transgression in subverting the social system in order to create new spaces for the circulation of meanings that help in restructuring identity. Articulating transgression as a theme and approach re-signifies meanings as well as transforming the passive and powerless agent into an active and powerful one. Foucault's article *A Preface to Transgression* (1977) suggests an essential methodological source for the conception of transgression in literature. His articulation of transgression operates alongside with his conceptions of *Limits*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity* in his study of transforming individuals into active and powerful variables.

In his book under the title *Language, counter-Memory, practice: Selected Essays and interviews* (1977), Foucault introduces his theory of transgression which is the essence of his thought of philosophy. Pierre Bourdieu outlined Foucault's philosophy as "a long exploration of transgression, of going beyond social limits, always inseparably linked to knowledge and power." (qtd in Eribon,1991,328). Foucault's idea of transgression is an extended elaboration on Georg Bataille's enthusiastic concern of transgression as it relates subjectivity and literature to transgression. Foucault explains that the act of transgression illuminates the imposed boundaries of culture and self. Thus, transgression exposes the significance of the idea of *Limit* that works closely to the possibility of transgression.

Besides, the importance of the concept of *Limit* is totally explained in Foucault's thought of transgression as he says that "the idea of a limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what was important to me in my reading of Nietzsche, Bataille, and Blanchot" (Gutting,2005,224). Accordingly, Foucault's conception of *Limit* suggests a radical break of the subject from its frame or even itself. In this way, Foucault challenges the philosophical and psychological conceptions of the unified subjectivity and reality. Moreover, in the Foucauldian perspective, transgression is fully defined through limits without which no transgression can be exercised. Foucault (1977) claims that:

The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable

and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows (34).

Furthermore, transgression is recognized to be an infinite process in which self is pushed into its own limits where new limits are uncovered. Transgression, as a process of liberating self from its limits, produces new confines which themselves should be subverted. In this way, the self is forced to its own borders where it reveals new boundaries in a boundless method of producing new limits. Similarly, transgression that reveals limits seeks also to overcome interpretation. It is "the process that reveals how interpretation keeps the limits of the self tied to itself, the subject, and ties the subject down to the formal structures of language" (Peter Bebergal, 1998).

Foucault's second concept that drives to an improved comprehension of his conception of transgression is *Problematization*. In this understanding, problematization is a remarkable practice of transgression which can be well understood through the lenses of problematization. The contribution of the Foucauldian problematization suggests raising some questions around certain traditional concepts to de-familiarize them and then enabling transgression to take its way on these concepts. In his meeting with Francois Ewald in (*The Concern for Truth* 1984), Foucault characterizes his work of philosophy with the concept of *Problematization* stating that:

Problematization doesn't mean the representation of a pre-existent object, nor the creation through discourse of an object that doesn't exist. It's the set of discursive or nondiscursive practices that makes something enter into the play of the true and false, and constitutes it as an object for thought (whether under the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc.) (qtd in Ball, 2012, 14).

However, Foucault also makes his conception of *Problematization* clear in his article *Polemics, Politics and Problematizations* (1984) as he explains that:

This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematization and the specific work of thought (389).

Furthermore, Foucault's origination of *Problematizations* is unparalleled since it:

what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to give it to oneself as an object of thought and to interrogate it about its meaning, its conditions, and its ends. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the movement by which one detaches one-self from it, constitutes it as an object and reflects on it as a problem (388).

In this manner, *Problematization* is a method for doing historical examination as well as it is a constitutive movement of a "historical ontology of ourselves" and our present (Foucault, 1984, 45)

The third concept that goes alongside with transgression is Discontinuity or, as O'Farrell (1993), suggests "the methodological equivalent of the limit" (148). In order to characterize transgression we need to consider discontinuity, break, threshold or the process that leads to the limit. In this process self is pushed into its own limits where there is no longer interpretation in an endless procedure of transgression. Instead of liberating self from its own limits new confines are imposed on self which need to be themselves transgressed. Thus, discontinuity comes into being to put an end to such infinite process of limitation. Joel A. C. Baum and Joseph Lampel (2010) argue that "Foucault is obsessed with the inescapable fact of ontological discontinuity" (88). Actually, Foucault argues that the past can be a question of study only if it is different and discontinuous with the present. Accordingly, the idea about history presupposes discontinuity as an essential idea of research. Further, Foucault claims that Discontinuity is an incomprehensible idea since it is emerged to underlay his historical, ethical and political perspectives. In his *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2004), Foucault claims that:

The notion of discontinuity is a paradoxical one: because it is both an instrument and an object of research; because it divides up the field of which it is the effect; because it enables the historian to individualize different domains but can be established only by comparing those domains. And because, in the final analysis, perhaps, it is not simply a concept present in the discourse of the historian, but something that the historian secretly supposes to be present: on what basis, in fact, could he speak without this discontinuity that offers him history-and his own history- as an object? (10).

Furthermore, Foucault claims in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1994) that discontinuity is the flow of the past and that "things are no longer perceived, expressed, described, classified, characterized and known in the same way" in their transitions from a period to another (217).

Foucault's conception of *Transgression* that goes alongside with concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization*, and *Discontinuity* is an attempt of creating a new awareness and realization to the meanings and implications of his thought and research. He found a new approach of knowledge as he transgresses the limits of classical approach of thinking in order to make an apparent problematization that seeks discontinuity with the past familiar approach of knowledge. Eventually, the idea of transgression is crucially related to the concepts of limit, problematization, and discontinuity. Foucault indicates that these concepts are totally based on the idea of transgression. Transgression plays a vital role in defining limits, releasing a problematized discourse and creating powerful discontinuity.

## 1.8 Methodology

The present study is an attempt of exploring Martin Amis' discourse of transgression and its role in restructuring identity. The relation between transgression and identity from one hand and transgression and resistance from the other hand guides the study to the theoretical work of Michel Foucault. Three concepts have been selected for the study, namely, *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*. These concepts move alongside with transgression in actualizing self and achieving subjectivity.

Therefore, a textual analysis is conducted to study transgression into the structural context to explore its role in subverting the social norms which in return creates new subjects. The study is a detailed textual analysis of Martin Amis' novels: *Money* (1984), *London Fields* (1989), *Time's Arrow* (1991) and *The Pregnant Widow* (2010). The study attempts to shed more light on the critical and resistant dimensions of the created transgressive characters in the selected novels. The characters are going to be examined to show the ideas behind their creations and their roles in resisting the prevailing discourses. In this sense, the study will address the representations of transgression in the selected texts which are reflected in the characters' acts to disrupt and subvert the dominant discourses.

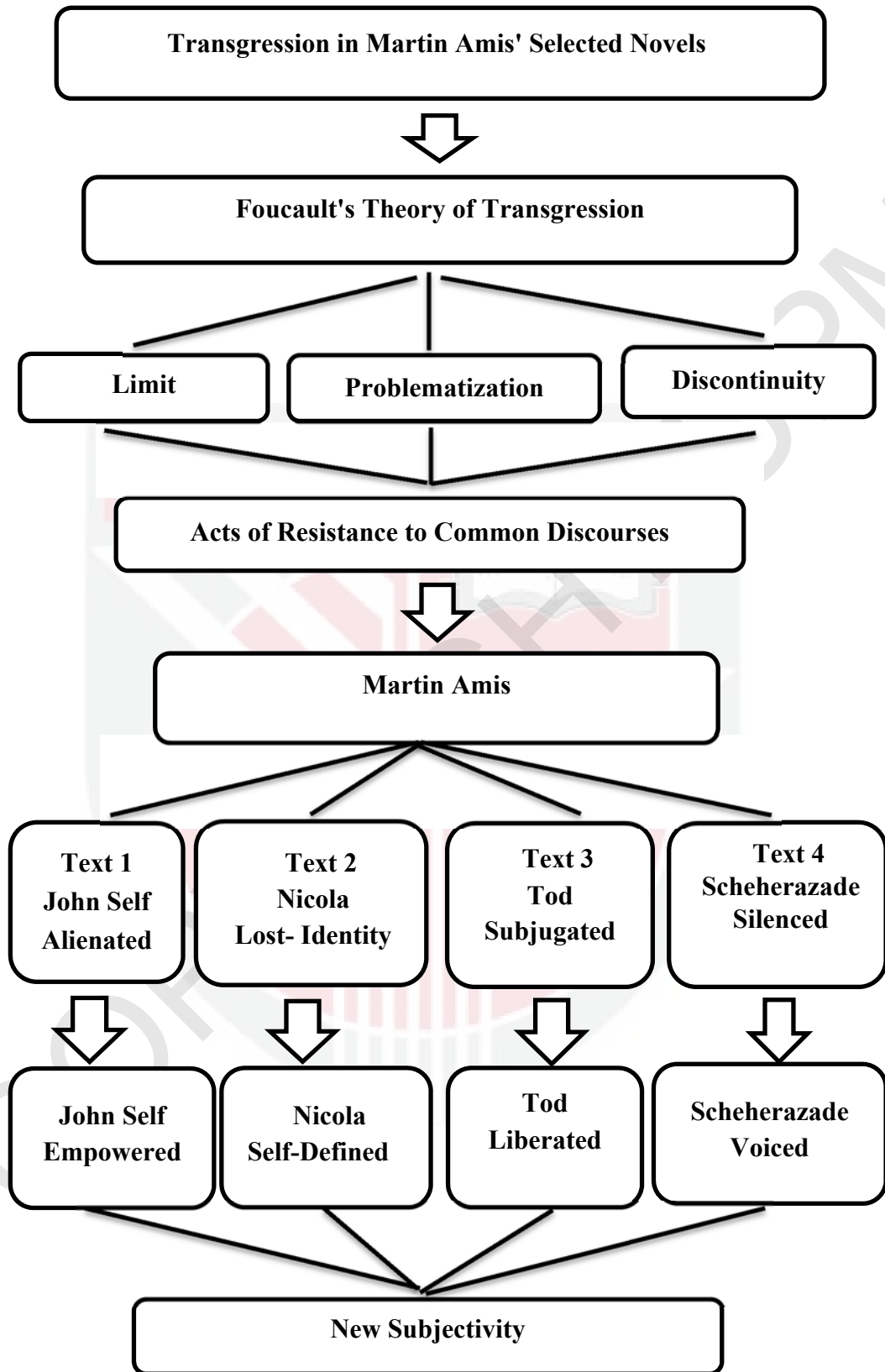
Furthermore, the transgressive identity of some characters of the selected novels are going to be addressed in terms of Foucault's conceptions of transgression in an attempt to discern the path of these characters and their seek to identify themselves as resistant characters to the prevailing discourses. The use of Foucault's concepts in analyzing Amis' transgressive characters will permit a better understanding of the ideas behind the creation of these characters from one hand and will help understand the behavior of these characters from the other hand. Besides, Amis' portrayal of these transgressive characters and their going beyond and against the norms of the current discourses will be exposed. Such exposure will show that such portrayal leads to the creation of new spaces of exercising power to those who are marginalized and decentered characters to situate themselves among the current dominant discourses.

Accordingly, Foucauldian concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity* will be conducted in analyzing the characters of Amis' selected novels to follow both the idea of constitution and the idea of resistance. The Foucauldian perspective of limit as the idea "that wrenches the subject from itself" (Gutting,2005,224) is manipulated to explore Amis' limitations of truth, masculinity, history and sexuality in the selected novels. Raising some questions around certain established norms enable wrenching them from themselves to let transgression takes its way on them as limits. In light of Foucauldian theory of transgression, the idea of subjectivity is grounded on the process of transgressing limits to re-define subjectivity.

Simultaneously, *Problematization* is conducted as an approach of analysis in accordance to Foucauldian theory of transgression to read the social transgression in

the selected novels. The contribution of the Foucauldian problematization suggests raising some questions around certain traditional concepts to de-familiarize them and then enabling transgression to take its way on them. Thus, problematizations of truth, masculinity, relationships, time, and sexuality are all investigated to show that the idea of identity formation can be grounded on the process of problematization in Amis' selected novels.

Finally, examining the *Discontinuity* in Amis' novels shows that transgression in Amis' novels is not only a mere social violation of limits and laws; rather it is a technical procedure in which subject is reflected as a big resistant entity. Discontinuity is viewed in accordance to Foucault's perception as an impression of the stream of history and the way in which "things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way" (1994,217) in their transitioning from a period of time to the next. Thus, discontinuities of culture, narration, life, standards, sex, love and innocence are all investigated in the selected novels to show the mode of resistance applied by transgression.



**Figure 1.1 : Methodology**



## 1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The current study comprises six chapters and a conclusion that sums up the findings of the study. The first chapter introduces the topic, the problem statement, conceptual framework, objectives, methodology, significance, scope and limitation of the study. It provides a general outline of the thesis. The second chapter gives a review of literature as it is classified into three noteworthy sections. The first section presents the review of literature which contextualizes the present study within the body of related studies. It consists of the literature review of past studies and the existing relevant studies done on Martin Amis' selected novels. A brief review on Amis and his discourse of writing is also included to contribute in serving the fulfillment of the research's objectives. The second section deals with a brief review of the past studies and the existing relevant studies done on the topic. The third section deals with the relevant studies on Michel Foucault and his concepts through which the data analysis of the study is based. It encompasses the existing theory of transgression as well as the identity re-formation based on Foucault's concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*. These sections are conducted so that, the present study can better define its position and justify its preference within the field of transgression.

Chapter three discusses the conceptual framework adopted in this study. Michel Foucault's philosophy and theory of transgression would be addressed in this chapter in an attempt to give a general feedback of the theoretical framework of the study. Furthermore, Foucault's main concepts that go alongside with transgression would be tackled in this part of the study. The transgression in the selected novels of Amis is going to be examined in lights of Foucault's conception of transgression and his main conceptions of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*.

Chapter four discusses the presentation of the transgressive characters in Amis' novels in terms of Foucault's concept of *Limit*. Amis' novels and transgressive characters are going to be tackled in terms of the concept of *Problematization* in the fifth chapter of the study. The sixth chapter is going to be dedicated to investigate the concept of *Discontinuity* in the selected novels of Amis.

The study ends up with a conclusion in the final chapter that recapitulates the most important findings and contributions of the study with suggestions for further research.

## 1.10 Definitions of the Terms

*Transgression* is etymologically characterized as the procedure of passing over; or of shifting from a reasonable condition of order into an unreasonable condition of disorder. The demonstration of transgression is the way of crossing over or going beyond social norms or civilian laws. Foucault's theory of transgression is an expanded notion of Bataille's perceptions of transgression as it associates the philosophy to individual subjectivity and literature. Therefore, Foucault's interest of

transgression is socially and independently explored in light of limitation and cultural repression. With the idea of transgression, boundaries of culture and self are all widely illuminated. Accordingly transgression becomes active alongside with the idea of limits. Foucault explains that limits can only be illuminated through transgression and vice versa. Foucault's conception of transgression goes alongside with concepts of *Limit*, *Problematization* and *Discontinuity*. It is an attempt of creating a new awareness and realization to the meanings and implications of transgression and its usage.

*Limit*: Foucault explains the importance of the concept of *Limit* in his thought of transgression as he says that "the idea of a limit-experience that wrenches the subject from itself is what was important to me in my reading of Nietzsche, Bataille and Blanchot" (Gutting,2005,224). *Limit* is indispensable in defining transgression.

*Problematization*: Foucault affords the concept of *Problematization* a worthy position in his work of philosophy. In his understanding, problematization is necessarily involved in his thought and philosophy of transgression. Foucault emphasizes that problematization is the act of creating problems as these problems are not ready-made but intentionally created. The contribution of the Foucauldian problematization suggests raising some questions around certain concepts to defamiliarize them and then enabling transgression to take its way on them. Moreover, Foucault explains in his *What is Enlightenment* (1984) that *Problematization* is not only a method for doing authentic investigation about history but also a constituent action of a "historical ontology of ourselves" and as well as of our present (46).

*Discontinuity* : Michel Foucault (1994) develops the term of *Discontinuity* to refer to the stream of history and to the idea that refers to "things are no longer perceived, described, expressed, characterized, classified, and known in the same way" (217). *Discontinuity* is suggested to be a working instrument of investigation with a specific end goal to configure information about history. Foucault argues that *Discontinuity* is fully presupposed in history, and that the past can only be questioned and researched if it is discontinuous and not quite the same as the present.

*Philosophy of the Bedroom*: The Marquis de Sade's philosophy adopted in his pornographic book *Philosophy in the Bedroom* (1795) which is written in the form of dramatic dialogue. It is a socio-political drama set in a bedroom in which the only two characters make an argument about political issues stating that the moral system of libertinism is the only way of supporting the political revolution. The book sums up Sade's philosophy of pleasure and pain which says that crime cannot be condemned if it is done on the purpose of seeking pleasure.

*Apollo and Dionysus* are remarkable gods in classical Greek and Roman mythology. They are used metaphorically by Nietzsche to embody his philosophy of transgression. Nietzsche argues that transgression is emerged from the Greek



philosophy of existence. Apollo, who is recognized as a god of art, poetry, oracles, archery, music, medicine, light, sun and learning is utilized to represent the realm of rationality and limits. On the other hand, Dionysus, god of grape harvest, vine, winemaking, madness, wine, theatre and religious ecstasy is used to be a representative of the flux and chaos. The struggle and conflict between the two realms generates the act of transgression.

*The literature of Closet:* is a term developed during the 20th century, taken from the Drama of the Closet which refers to that play which is not expected to be performed in front of audiences, but rather recited by a single reader or, sometimes, in a little gathering that anyone can hear. Moreover, the literature of Closet is rapidly increased in the 19th century with the prohibitions of sodomy and homosexuality.

*Governmentality:* is a Foucauldian expression initially used to portray a specific method for directing peoples in modern European history throughout the rise of the thought of the State. Foucault later extended his definition of the term to include the systems and techniques which are intended to represent the behavior of both peoples and individuals at each level not simply the authoritative or political level.

*Panopticon:* is the Foucauldian idea of observation. It is built on the idea of circular structure with a big tower of observation in the center point of an open space encompassed by external dividers. Foucault used this idea to explain the mechanism of power in such a building which stated to be like a prison. The concept also, illustrated the task of a ceremony as a system of power.

*Archaeology:* is a Foucauldian term created amid the 1960s to express his process of framing history. This approach of framing exposes the discursive traces created in the past to rewrite and reframe the "history of the present". Furthermore, this technique of writing used to provide a look at history in order to understand the present.

*Genealogy:* Michel Foucault developed the concept of *genealogy* as a historical technique in the end of the 20th century. The concept traces the development of people and societies through history. The concept questions the commonly understood emergence of social and philosophical concepts and beliefs by following the circulated discourses.

*Spiral:* Foucault presented this concept in his article *A Preface to Transgression* (1977) to discuss the relationship between *Limit* and transgression. He explains that such kind of relation isn't like that of black and white but "rather their relationship takes the form of a spiral which no simple infraction can exhaust" (35). So this type of relationship, according to Jencks (2003), is a "dynamic force of cultural

reproduction" as "it prevents stagnation by breaking the rule and it ensures stability by reaffirming the rule" (7)



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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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