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The BBC is brave or mad to film Martin Amis's Money

By [Michael Deacon](#) **Celebrities** Last updated: November 11th, 2009

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Martin Amis, whose novel Money is being filmed by the BBC. Photo: Eleanor Bentall

It was rubbished for commissioning an umpteenth version of Jane Austen's Emma, but you can't say BBC Drama has taken the soft option this time. It's just announced details of a two-part literary adaptation to be shown next year: Money, by Martin Amis.

This is either going to be the most awe-inspiringly skilful achievement in the history of scriptwriting, or a giant, sucking quagmire of impenetrability. Because Money won't be an easy novel to film. It isn't even an easy novel to read. Although clever, original and often desperately funny, it doesn't have a TV-friendly plot, or indeed much of a plot at all. (Look: does anyone fully understand, or find credible, what happens at the end, with Fielding Goodney's absurdly complex financial scam?)

Money isn't a story, it's an internal monologue, written from the point of view of a man who doesn't always comprehend what's going on around him (which may be why, although the narrator's a snorting lout, we can't help but sympathise with him: we don't always comprehend what's going on around him either).

Unless the producers of the TV version come up with some ingenious get-out, they'll have to do one of three things: 1) communicate the narrator's thoughts using voiceover (which would be irritating); 2) cut out his thoughts altogether (which would surely be disastrous, given that they *are* the book); 3) turn his thoughts into dialogue (which would make the programme so different from Amis's text that you'll wonder why they wanted to adapt it at all).

Really, there would be only one way to film Money without ruining it: point

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a camera at Amis while he reads the whole book aloud. A little lacking in visual variety, admittedly.

I wonder what'll be next.

"In this thrilling five-part adaptation of Finnegans Wake on ITV1, Robson Green stars as a person, although possibly not, because literary scholars disagree over whether James Joyce's final novel, if indeed it is a novel, actually contains distinct characters. Timothy Spall plays a semi-colon."

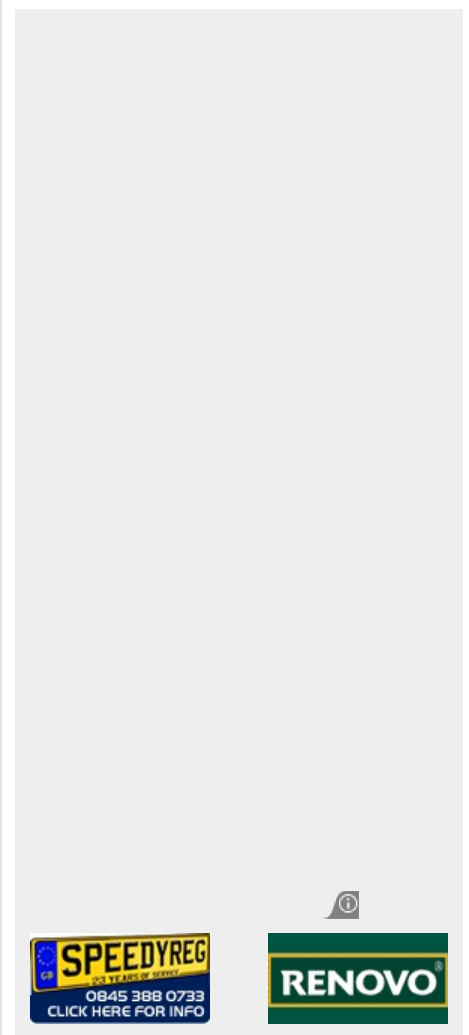
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