

## Martin Amis also talked to Johann Hari about a range of other subjects. Here are his comments...

"They're nice. Very appealing. It's been really nice. It's not really a heavy load. I don't look at any of their creative stuff. All I do is teach great books, from the very authorial point of view; don't identify with Mr Darcy or Elizabeth, identify with Jane Austen, that's the way we sort of do it, which is the way you should do it anyway. I very much enjoyed having this sort of study in my life, you know back doing some studying, because you may set yourself, but you don't complete these reading projects you have, but if you have to read these books, you do, and then you reread them, because you realise you read them in the summer and that's no good to you now, and it's been one night a fortnight, two classes."

### On the Sixties social revolution

"It wasn't to achieve any tangible end, political end, it was to loosen up some things, [and] some very marvellous things were done with it. Although ideology then takes on at this rate of its own, and human beings are all vulnerable to it, because it involves a mass, it is invulnerable to it, and it always goes too far. And it's a disaster for the intellect and for morality in the end, always, and it's always violent. Ideology is always violent, always has violence in it, because any belief system, any all panoptic idea, is going to involve an illusion, because life and the world, neither is susceptible to one system. So you're buying into illusion, and as soon as you're challenged on it you can't defend it with mind alone, so the fists tighten, the glands get going and you're hot under the collar and that is the voice you hear, when you rush up against it at public meetings."

"But I think there's also something luxurious about this ideology, its great advances on tolerance, then 'til it slips over into another kind of intolerance, but those gains are real."

"But the core of it is a kind of polite fiction about human beings that it imputes equality to the extent that doesn't really exist. We're all pretending that we're the same and that everyone's opinions, everyone's feelings, are as pertinent as everyone else's. Gore Vidal put that very well I thought, when he said, 'I may not have the education you have, but my feelings are as important as everyone else's', and the promoting of feeling, the ridiculous assumption of the right that you're going to get through life without being offended. Richard Dawkins said, 'No one has the right not to be offended.' It's going to happen to you."

### On Jihadism

"Jihadism is about the embrace of unreason, which is what all death cults do. Many tyrants use it - Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, never let the word reason go by without shitting on it. In origin it's all to do with the early 20th century when science turned out to be so freaky, Freud, Einstein. And science in fact is always flirting with the mystical because that's how breakthroughs are made. It's not through the times-tables. So the great distrust of reason. And then this marvellous liberation from reason, which really does you a power of good for a bit, especially arm in arm with suppression of the value of human life, then everything gets possible for a bit, so it's not irrational, it's an irrationalist embrace of irrationality."

### On nuclear disarmament

"The West's anti-proliferation policy is a moral and philosophical non-starter. When the Administration talks of depriving Iran of nuclear weapons by means of [new generation] nuclear weapons, we may

wonder how convincing this will sound to a country whose core dread is invasion? The solution is both entirely obvious and entirely unattainable. We must give the Iranians some face; and then all seven nuclear powers must begin to scale back towards the zero option."

### **On 'You'**

"Don't you think You with a capital Y is riding for a fall? It's been a very good few years for You. You has been *Time* magazine's man of the year, put that in Your CV. Everywhere you look, You Ask the Questions, You Write The Reviews, it's been a marvellous ephoresence for You, but You is getting a little big for its boots. It ought to be scaled back."

### **On political intimidation**

"There is intimidation, the intimidation from people like [Terry] Eagleton and [Ronan] Bennett, all these heavy words being used - base, obnoxious, vicious - being used to describe a peace-loving novelist, rather than [about] people who? Have you read *The Secret Agent* recently? People whose thoughts caress the idea of death and destruction, who think of people with their legs ripped off, and stroke it in their minds. Not a word about any of that in Eagleton or Bennett."

### **On the failure of the 21/7 bombs**

"It was a great moment for multiracial Britain, when one of those July 21 [attempted suicide-bombers] had tried to detonate his bomb and then had a little fit and passed out, and the next thing he knew there was an African, with a sort of London accent, leaning over him and saying 'Are you alright mate?'"

### **On British liberalism**

"You could say that this whole ideology we have here is an extension of middle-class guilt. England has middle-class guilt about its evolution, about being so far ahead in what Sam Harris calls 'moral wealth'. If you say some countries are more morally evolved than others, some journalists run to the telephone, think they've got a scoop. But look at the evolution within countries, these morally, comparatively evolved countries. When the My Lai massacre in '68 there was a folk song in praise of [the Lieutenant who over saw the slaughter] William Calley that was number one, sold a million. When Calley's sentence was reduced from 12 years hard labour to one year's house arrest, there was applause in Congress. Compare that to the reaction to Abu Ghraib. That's moral evolution."

### **On his best friend, Christopher Hitchens, and whether Hitch has influenced his post-9/11 trajectory**

"Well, we talked a very great deal about [September 11, and Iraq]. We did sort of very clearly disagree about the Iraq war. I remember a conversation with him just before it started, where he said, 'How are you feeling about it?' I said I had two main doubts - about legitimacy and misuse of resources. My feeling always was [that we should] make Afghanistan the model, where you have already, you have tremendous evidence of repatriation of Afghans, 25 per cent of the population has returned, the census has shot up - the opposite to the pattern in Iraq. Nation build in Afghanistan, get Afghanistan right. It was actually Kissinger, who, according to Bob Woodward, who convinced Bush that Afghanistan was not enough. I thought it was enough."

"[Hitchens] is marvellous to sound out ideas against, he'll show you the flaws and the rest, in supposedly brilliant notions you have. But he has an ideological streak and I don't think I do, and this goes back 35 years, to when I used to ridicule him for selling the *Socialist Worker* on Kilburn High Road on rainy Saturday mornings. I said - you're interested in the wrong revolution mate, it's the social revolution that you should turn your attention to."

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