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Martin Amis: The wunderkind comes of	🙀 <b>៤</b> 🖪 (35)		
age Long described as the enfant terrible of the literary novel, the author of London Fields and Money has now turned 60. Yet his new book – the 12th – reveals that, far from losing his youthful outlook, he has rediscovered it	Comments (25)	Exhibition now open.	
Andrew Anthony The Observer, Sunday 10 January 2010 Article history	🗏 🖂 🧲 😫 🙎		
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Next month sees the release of <i>The Pregnant Widow</i> , Martin Amis's 12th novel. Like heavy snowfall, the publication of a new Amis novel has become a kind of established media ritual.	<b>Books</b> Martin Amis · Kingsley Amis	On guardian.co.uk Most viewed Zeitgeist Latest Last 24 hours 1. News: Woman who	
Everyone knows the rules of the game: the writer will argue that his work holds a mirror up to the culture, while the culture responds by inviting the writer to take a look in the mirror. But over the years, this exchange has	Series The Observer profile More features	dumped Lola the cat in wheelie bin defends her actions	
slowly evolved into something less reflexive and perhaps a little more reflective.	More resources More profiles	2. <b>News:</b> 'British spy found dead identified as Foreign Office worker	
For Amis has increasingly taken to studying the image looking back at him and, in the process, he has become his generation's most astute documentarist of ageing and a symbol of the accelerating passage of time. Having begun his literary career at the precocious age of 23, Amis	Related	3. News: Poor families bear brunt of coalition's austerity drive	
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enjoyed a prolonged youth stretching deep into his thirties. Not only was he young, he also looked young – short and slim with the full lips and piercing eyes of a Caravaggio model. Rare was the profile that didn't	23 Nov 2008 Review: Everyday	5. News: MI6 worker found murdered in London flat	
refer to him as an enfant terrible, even in his forties.	Drinking by Kingsley Amis	More most viewed	
These were the years of <i>Success</i> and <i>Money</i> , titles that worked equally as ironic social comments and accurate personal assessments. <i>Money</i> even boasted a character called Martin Amis, a novelist with an enviably	12 Jul 2008 The digested classic: Lucky Jim by Kingsley Amis	Guardian Books on Twitter	
cool lifestyle and a daunting intellectual hinterland. It was meant to toy with media-shaped perceptions of Amis, but the truth	10 Nov 2002 Observer review:	Latest news, views and links from the Guardian's books team	
was that the real Amis did lead a kind of male fantasy life. He <i>did</i> play tennis each day, snooker with Julian Barnes and poker with Al Alvarez. He <i>had</i> slept with everyone, read everything and he <i>did</i> speak pure prose in a voice seemingly made out of champagne and roll-ups.	Slipstream by Elizabeth Jane Howard	Sarah_Crown: RT @parisreview "At night you dream six dreams. But ARE they six dreams?" - Philip Roth's Paris Review interview http://tpr.ly/dkPrPB #books about 4 hours, 28 minutes ago	
Then came middle age, complete with the full-option crisis package – divorce, parental death, mortal dread and dental surgery. It all suddenly seemed to whizz by in a blur of censorious headlines.		Sarah_Crown: Couldn't agree more RT @brenstrong "This is the night mail" - WH Auden youtube.com/watch?v=zmciuK feckin' great #books about 5 hours, 55 minutes ago	
Now the wild child of London letters is 60. And perhaps for the first time in his adult life, he looks his age.		Sarah_Crown: RTing for users of the #books site: early c20th Russia in colour:	
"Keith was now well launched on the bullet train of the fifties," Amis writes in <i>The Pregnant Widow</i> , "where the minutes often dragged but the years tumbled over one another and disappeared. And the mirror was trying to		amazing (via @andydickson, @catherineshoard) http://bit.ly/b9YfGl about 1 day, 3 hours ago	
tell him something." Not since Snow White have mirrors been so vocal. The message they have to tell is that getting old takes its toll. Amis is too much of a satirist to mourn his lost youth – he can leave that to his male		<ul> <li>Find more tweets from our books team</li> <li>Follow our books team on a Twitter list</li> </ul>	

critics and female fans - but discovering older age, we gather, is scant

recompense for the loss.

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Web2PDF converted by Web2PDFConvert.com Still, if the joke with Yellow Dog, the poorly received 2003 novel, was that Amis had dropped the enfant and was just plain terrible, then The Pregnant Widow is a return not just to form but to more juvenile days.

It tells the story of Keith Nearing, a bookishly bright and carnally propelled young man who spends the summer of 1970 in an Italian castle with a group of tumescent friends, male and female, just at the moment that women began to explore their new sexual liberty.

The title refers to Alexander Herzen's comment that in killing the past order before giving birth to the new, revolutions leave a pregnant widow. The expectant widow in this novel is feminism, which, according to Amis, "is still in its second trimester... I think it has several more convulsions to undergo before we'll see the child".

The news that Amis has turned his attention to feminism is not something that feminists will necessarily greet with air-punching celebration. In the past, and indeed quite recently, Amis has been accused of misogyny. It was said feminist judges ensured that London Fields, which featured a nymphomaniac seeking to be murdered, never made it on to the Booker prize longlist.

And last year, Amis drew criticism when he noted of the public interest in Katie Price that "all we are really worshipping is two bags of silicone" though it probably says more about the dislocation of feminism than about Amis that mocking the cult of Jordan is deemed worthy of rebuke.

In one way or another, Amis's subject has always been sex, particularly the male view of sex, and therefore of women. At the same time, his method has remained extravagantly and grotesquely comic. In novels like Money, he pioneered a baroque-pornographic style to depict the sexualisation of the contemporary world. It was one of the aspects of Amis writing that his father, Kingsley, found unappealing.

"Sex is a fascinating area," Amis senior once explained, "but it's harder than he thinks. Nobody says that fiction should be able to discuss everything; he thinks he can do it, but I wonder if he can."

Though extremely close, father and son were natural antagonists: Martin was an anti-nuke Labour supporter, Kingsley a Thatcher-loving Conservative; Kingsley was a reckless adulterer, Martin the devoted family man.

But the differences have faded or closed with age. Amis did what he said he'd never do and left his first wife, Antonia Phillips, following his affair with Isabel Fonseca, who became his second wife. Then it emerged that he'd fathered a daughter, Delilah, during a youthful liaison. Lately, Martin has even begun to bear a physical resemblance to Kingsley.

And now it seems that the son has his own doubts about writing on sex. Keith learns in The Pregnant Widow that you can't write about sex because "authorial omnipotence" is too much for the limited sexual potency of the "male creature".

The observation appears to be stamped with the author's approval because Keith is obviously based on him. Versions of other real-life characters, including Amis's close friend Christopher Hitchens, the late poet lan Hamilton, AJ Ayer, are also awarded walk-on parts.

The one most pregnant with meaning is based on Amis's late sister, Sally. It is well known how Amis, the child of a broken home, almost became a school dropout but, with the help of his stepmother, Elizabeth Jane Howard, went on to gain a first at Oxford, dazzled at the New Statesman and the Observer and enjoyed international renown as a novelist.

Sally's tale is altogether less inspiring. She waged a long struggle with alcoholism and depression and died, aged 46, in 2000. She was also, says Amis, "pathologically promiscuous". He recently called her "one of the most spectacular victims of the revolution".

Originally, Amis intended to write an explicitly autobiographical novel but gave up after several years of work. Instead, he divided the concept into two novels. Amis is apparently now working on the other section, entitled State of England, and promises to include a lottery-winning criminal called Lionel Asbo. If it sounds like a parody of an Amis character's name, then perhaps that's the price of originality. So distinctive is his

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style, its circular rhythms and comic beats, its verbal elegance and brutal slang, and so galvanising was its initial impact that there is a sense in which he is destined to ape himself. After all, everyone else has.

In 2006, Amis returned to England, having spent two-and-a-half years living in Uruguay. It took him a while to regain his social bearings. "Some strange things have happened, it seems to me, in my absence," he noted. "I didn't feel like I was getting more right wing when I was in Uruguay, but when I got back I felt that I had moved quite a distance to the right while staying in the same place."

Following the exposure of a plot by Islamic extremists to blow up transatlantic aeroplanes, he made some wildly ill-conceived remarks, suggesting that the Muslim community "will have to suffer" – "curtailing of freedom" and "deportation" were mentioned.

He subsequently withdrew the comments, explaining that they were said in the heat of the moment, but the damage was done and, for some observers, racism and Islamophobia could be added to the old charge of misogyny.

Such was the line taken by the Marxist academic Terry Eagleton, who accused Amis of having become his father. If the literary theorist had a point, he lost it in a self-righteous diatribe that may have owed its ire to the fact that Amis had landed a well-paid position as professor of creative writing at Manchester University, from where Eagleton was about to exit as professor of English literature.

The move into teaching confirmed a profoundly anti-reactionary quality in Amis: his interest in what comes next. A seasoned sceptic he may be but he's not really an old cynic. He tends to see social collapse around every corner, yet he remains committed to the new.

Amis is strong on describing the world and weak on plotting a story. This is not, as is commonly argued, because he is a stylist but, rather, because he is a moralist. Instead of narrative drive, he seeks universal significance. Sometimes, he strains literally for it with astronomical descriptions and sometimes he achieves it with effortless aplomb.

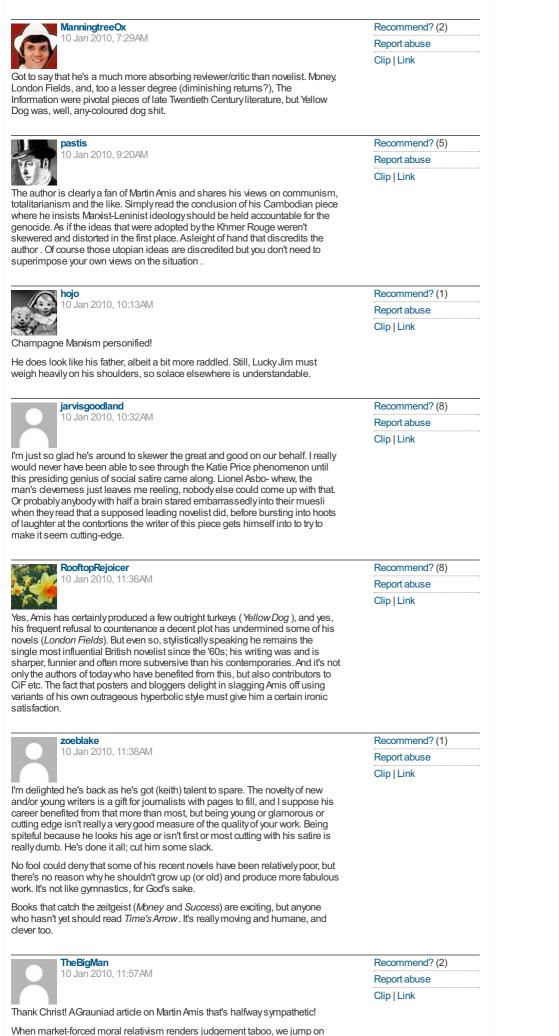
There's a sort of reverse bathos operating in Amis in which he slips from the empty epic to the comic sublime. At such moments, and there are plenty in *The Pregnant Widow*, no one better understands the cosmic joke that is humanity. Nor is anyone as funny telling it.

have fully addressed the contemporary world and gives readers the chance to laugh along with the madness. don't know if feminist readers will be laughing

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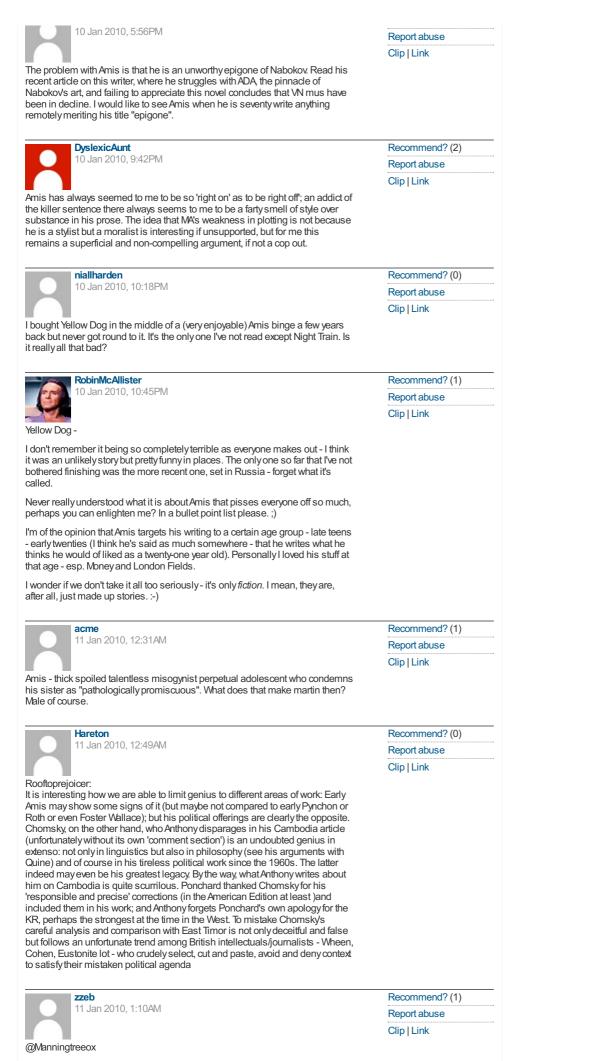
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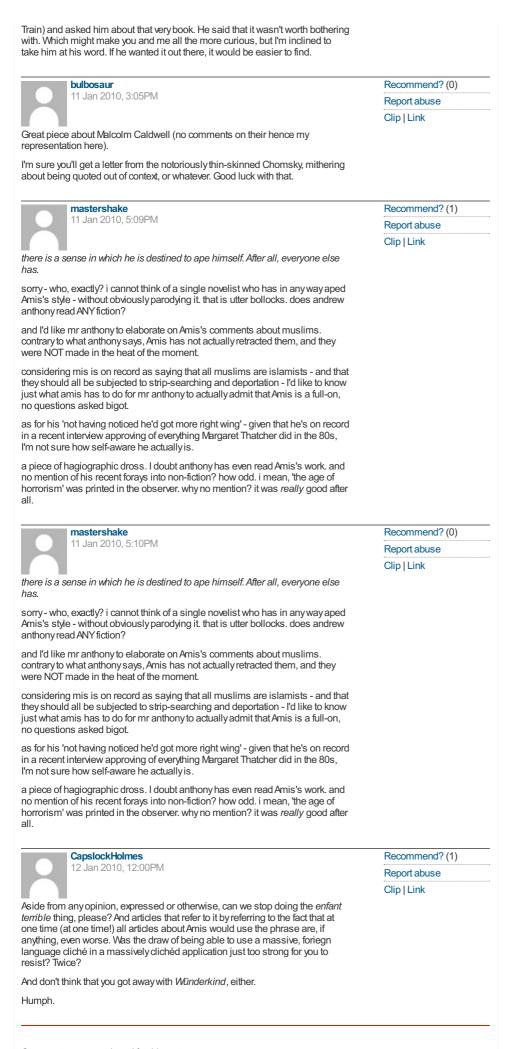
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<b>RooftopRejoicer</b> 10 Jan 2010, 2:47PM         @hareton         I agree that Chomsky is a genius, but in the field of linguistics, which he single-handedly revolutionised. In the field of political history he is just another interpreter of events, but I would hardly call him a genius in that respect.	Recommend? (0) Report abuse Clip   Link
RobinMcAllister         10 Jan 2010, 3:32PM         Ditto the comment on having more ideas per page, although admittedly you wouldn't wanted every novel you read to be that densely written.         Interesting comments from Andrew Anthony that Amis's focus morality and his striving for universal significance mean that he doesn't pay much attention to plot. I think this kind of true: plot for Amis, is just a framework for his voice and his ways of seeing. However, it's not like style + morality + universality ? plot. You could, conceivably have 'em all. Got to admit that I've also been reading Marty's stuff since being a teenager and never noticed the lack of plot - it's quite right though.         The Invasion of the Space Invaders - dead expensive and, I would guess, not worth it, unless you're a collector.	Recommend? (0) Report abuse Clip   Link
brian68         10 Jan 2010, 5:28PM         Lionel Asbo - sounds like a character from richard littlejohn's brief foray into the realms of literature. Hell in a handcart anyone?         Champagne Designer-Handbagge could be lionel's posh 'bird'. That one's free, marty.         Some of my favourite novels have been written by Amis, but also several where i do not have a clue what is going on at any level. What happened at the end of yellow dog? What happened in any of ordinary people?         Hopefully by the time the pregnant widow comes out i'll have finished ellroy's death's a rover. Hopefully.	Recommend? (1) Report abuse Clip   Link

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I went to an Amis book--signing in NYC a few years ago (I think it was for Night



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