### Search About Salon Table Talk Newsletters Advertise in Salon Investor Relations



Search



### **Directory**

## Hot Topics Book Reviews Martin Amis Book Bag E-Books Garrison Keillor Sylvia Plath Harry Potter Salon Book Awards Salman Rushdie

Articles by date

Dave Eggers

All of Salon.com

SALON.COM SITES

# Arts & Entertainment Books Business Comics Health Mothers Who Think News People Politics Sex Technology - Free Software Project

Fechnology
- Free Software
Project

Letters
Columnists
Table Talk
Salon Plus
Salon Shop
Salon Radio



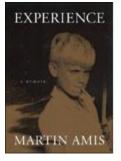
SHOP → Visit Salor Shop for editor's picks of recent ficti

More great offers Salon Plus

## Working-class monster

Relatives say Martin Amis' new memoir exploits his murdered cousin, and they're right -- but not in the way they think.

### By Graham Joyce



June 29, 2000 | What does celebrated English novelist Martin Amis have to do with Britain's most grisly serial killer? Fred West was a pedophile who raped, tortured and killed, a man who even murdered two of his own children. Amis' cousin Lucy Partington was one of West's victims. In his new memoir,

"Experience," Amis devotes great attention to Lucy's fate. The book flap trumpets Martin's relationship with his father, Kingsley (a literary giant of the post-War period), and his kinship to Lucy equally. The author tells us he keeps two photos by his desk: one of Lucy and one of Delilah, his 20-year-old daughter, whom he had never met until 1995.

Now Lucy's family -- particularly Lucy's sister Marian Partington -- has gone on record saying that Amis barely knew Lucy. They claim that Amis has capitalized on his slender relationship with his cousin in order to peddle

### **Current Storie**

- Not a drop to drink Pointing of that it takes 800 gallons of water to make one hamburger, a British writer argues that water shortage is the "defining crisis" our time. By Katharine Mieszkowski
- <u>Instant</u>

   <u>salvation</u> In A.M
   Homes'
   surprisingly sun
   new novel, an
   alienated

1 of 3 4/25/2006 4:40 PM

PARTICIPATE

### **Table Talk**

[Freewheeling Salon forums]

### Mergers by the book

The plot thickens when titles go in the blender.

Getting a read on Canada What literature's white-hot in the Great White North?

Pulpless fiction Can the e-book ever supplant the real thing?

Posts of the week

### **The Well**

[Pioneering members-only discussions]

Rockin' at Konocti
Harbor Are the
Neville Brothers
blessed with amazing
grace?

### **Sound Off**

- E-mail Salon
- <u>Send us a Letter to</u> <u>the Editor</u>
- Today's letters

WAYS TO GET SALON

### Newsletter

Sign up to receive free e-mail updates from Salon -- now in 12 different varieties!

### Downloads

- Get Salon.com on your PDA
- Salon.com headlines from <u>My</u> <u>Netscape</u>
- More ways to get Salon

"Experience." Marian says, "The story of Lucy is being used to sell this book."

The Sunday Times of London recently took up Marian's cry. Being pilloried in the press is nothing new for Amis -- the British media has been air-guitaring a "greedy Martin" riff ever since he once had the temerity to hold out for a good publishing deal. He has even been accused of making money out of Auschwitz with his Holocaust novel, "Time's Arrow." But the complaint this time is that the tragedy of Lucy's killing has been annexed into

Amisworld, and the family is resisting his version of the truth.

Marian has contacted Amis and his publisher to complain about inaccuracies and "betrayals," but what seems to have upset her most is the sense in which Lucy's life has been made over by a famous author's inauthentic account. This work, she claims, is presented as straightforward autobiography when fictional speculation often usurps the facts of the case.

Amis is dismayed. Of Marian he says that he is "distressed that she's distressed. But I'm writing about my life and Lucy is a part of my life." But there's the rub: How much was Lucy a part of Martin Amis' life?

Not much at all, according to Marian, and Amis admits to meeting Lucy on only a few occasions before her disappearance in 1973 (when Amis was 24). Yet so strongly does Lucy feature in "Experience" -- in tender portraits of the two suggestive of endless country-garden English summers as childhood friends -- that it's shocking to hear claims that Amis knew the family only remotely.

Let it be said: Martin Amis has never been served well by the critics and the literary establishment in Britain. As for the tabloids, they lick their lips and their hatchets when this stuff goes down. The pyrotechnic brilliance of his style is envied and his wintry reserve is resented. But one thing generally agreed upon even by admirers is that his work is a compassion-free zone. The fashionable cynicism and frigid irony of the '80s, during which he made his mark, are out of vogue now. He knows this.

One reads "Experience" with mounting excitement because Amis seems at last to have discovered this missing element. The memoir contains some of his best writing to date --

Print story

E-mail story

Backflip this article to find it again middle-aged professional goe from unenlightened zero to sensitive superhero in 30 days or less. By Heather Havrilesky

- "This Book W Save Your Life" an excerpt from A.M. Homes' ne novel, Richard Novak realizes h is painfully, terrifyingly alone By A.M. Homes • Karen Finley
- Karen Finley smears Bush all over The notorious performance art talks about censorship, whe Bush will go afte he dies, and her new work "Geor and Martha," in which Martha Stewart has a tryst with W. an finds Osama hiding in his colon.

By David Bowma

2 of 3 4/25/2006 4:40 PM

except for this vexed subject of Lucy, where there is a dose of too much lyricism, a splash of too much manufactured sentiment.

**■ Next page** | 1, <u>2</u>

Maya Angelou reads from "The Heart of a Woman"

Salon Search About Salon Table Talk Newsletters Advertise in Salon Investor Relations

Arts & Entertainment | Books | Business | Comics | Health | Mothers Who Think | News
People | Politics | Sex | Technology and The Free Software Project
Letters | Columnists | Salon Plus | Salon Shop

Reproduction of material from any Salon pages without written permission is strictly prohibited Copyright © 2000 Salon.com
Salon, 22 4th Street, 16th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94103
Telephone 415 645-9200 | Fax 415 645-9204
E-mail | Salon.com Privacy Policy

3 of 3