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MailOnline

After his attack on the monarchy, why DOES Martin Amis hate his own country?

By [A N Wilson](#)

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Embittered: Martin Amis has criticised the 'philistine' royal family

Martin Amis, the diminutive 61-year-old novelist, has been making yet another brash bid for publicity. So disillusioned with Britain has he become that he tells an influential French magazine, 'I'd prefer not to be English', and goes on to be toweringly rude about the Royal Family.

According to Martin, William, 28, and Kate, 29, are 'children' about to be sacrificed for the needs of the Crown. In an interview with French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, he says their wedding is symptomatic of the inadequacies of a 'pathetic' English aristocracy made up of 'philistine' snobs.

His latest outbursts concerning the decline of Britain and our supposed worship of celebrity come with a predictable bucketful of bile about the forthcoming Royal Wedding — masked as sympathy for our future King and Queen.

'One can't, in the era of media supremacy, make one's children go through everything which a wedding like this entails: not only the loss of one's private life, but also the sacrifice of oneself pure and simple.'

'The Royal Family is so spied upon, so scrutinised by the media, that the life of these children becomes quite unbearable.'

He suggests that Princes William and Harry would be much happier if they stayed single.

'Harry and William rebelled some eight or nine years ago and effectively let people know they weren't going to sacrifice their lives for the Crown. They were probably told it's the oldest institution in Europe and they had to preserve it. But how can we, today, ask for so much from a human being?'

One of Amis's more extraordinary predictions is that, come April 29, most of those who show any enthusiasm for the wedding of Prince William and Kate Middleton will be immigrants.

'The atmosphere is going to be irrational.' (Can an atmosphere be either rational or irrational?)

'It is difficult not to think about it in a positive way. Without counting that, in the crowd, there will be Pakistani immigrants, Africans the most enthusiastic perhaps.'

Moving from the racial composition of the crowds in the London streets, Amis complains about individual members of the Royal Family.



Prince William and Kate Middleton: According to the novelist, they are to be 'sacrificed' to the monarchy

Her Majesty the Queen has committed the cardinal sin of not finding Amis terribly interesting. 'I've met the Queen,' he tells the French magazine, 'and the problem is, the Queen doesn't listen to what you say to her. Because she's not supposed to understand the remarks that one makes to her.'

Referring to his late father Sir Kingsley — author of *Lucky Jim* — Amis explains: 'I allowed myself to say impetuously when she greeted me: "You knighted my father." Her only reaction was to look far away, vaguely staring at a painting on the wall. That's all.'

Amis is particularly critical of Prince Charles for his condemnation of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* — the book that led Iran to issue a death threat against the Bombay-born writer because it insulted Islam.

Referring to the Prince, Amis says: 'We've had dinner together twice, a small gathering, four or five people. He was still married to Diana, but he never mentioned her name.'

'[Charles is] charming, he has an extraordinary laugh, like a pig's snore. I recall quite a memorable conversation with him about Salman Rushdie, just after the fatwa, in 1989. He was very anti-Rushdie.'

'I asked: "Why?" [Charles] replied: "I'm sorry, but when someone insults the profound beliefs of a people . . ."

'He always speaks like that, very knowledgeable. And he is very sensitive on religious issues, of any kind, because the King of England is supposed to protect the faith.

'I told him that a novel is not a stance. It doesn't insult anyone. Rushdie's book was targeted by Ayatollah Khomeini not so much because it was shocking, but because it gave new enthusiasm to the Islamic revolution.'

Amis goes on to discuss an encounter he had with Prince Philip.

'I had a lunch with the Duke of Edinburgh. He was surprised by my profession: "Oh, you're a writer."'



Insulting: Prince Charles is charming, but laughs 'like a pig's snore', according to Amis

What we sense here is an absurdly inflated ego on Amis's part. No one expects high-level literary awareness from the Royal Family. Why should the Duke of Edinburgh be aware of Amis's novels? And yet of the royals, Amis says: 'They are philistines.'

In the interview, Amis also denounces the cult of celebrity in Britain. 'Celebrity is the new religion. And you want it to come to you just like that, no effort.'

Those who have followed Martin Amis's career might consider this a bit ripe — coming from a writer whom broadcaster Anna Ford denounced as 'a whingeing narcissist'.

Martin leapt to fame in 1973 with his first novel, *The Rachel Papers*, and became English literature's equivalent of a pop star. After that, he carefully cultivated his celebrity status. In fact, it is hard to think of any English novelist alive who aimed so obviously to become a celebrity first and a writer second.

So you wonder if — behind all the bilious remarks which Martin Amis has been making to the French press — he feels affronted by this country for not thinking more of him.

For the truth is the British stopped buying Martin Amis's books and he became a person they gossiped about instead — his teeth, his rows with other celebrities, his marriages.

He complained at being treated like fodder for the gossip columns, but his much-awaited last novel, *The Pregnant Widow*, was little more than an extended gossip column about his own amours, with thinly-disguised portraits of former girlfriends.

He then announced his next book was to be about Jordan — no, not the supposed honeymoon destination of Prince William and Kate Middleton, but the glamour model Katie Price.

After that, he suggested that the law-abiding majority of the Muslim community in Britain should be 'made to suffer until it gets its house in order' — an unpleasant phrase which caused one of his colleagues at Manchester University (from which he receives £70,000 per year for giving a few 'creative writing' classes) to denounce him as a 'BNP thug'.



Uninterested: The Queen committed the sin of not finding Amis interesting; while the Duke was surprised he was a writer

The reality is that the former enfant terrible of English novelists has turned into a strange, purple-faced parody of his father — only without the back catalogue of great books that Kingsley so impressively notched up.

And therein lies the problem. The British public turned against Amis for the simple reason he no longer delighted them with his books — perhaps that is why he feels the need to sneer and snarl back.

Rather than lying low until he could produce a masterpiece to match his one truly brilliant book, *Money*, he wrote a sad trickle of duds. His physical transformation is a manifestation of what must have been going on within.

Increasingly, his public utterances are more and more bizarre. He announced he will soon be leaving Britain to live in the U.S., and maybe that is just as well.

Most of us have had enough of him — his mean-minded denunciations of the poor old Queen and her grandson's wedding being the final straw.

When he totters aboard the plane to New York, there will be rather fewer fans waving him goodbye than will collect outside Buckingham Palace on April 29.

It is this brutal fact that has occasioned the latest splurge of Amis rage against the Royal Family.

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I am not sure what this guy's true intention is regarding this outburst, but fail to dissagree with him on some things that are mentioned. I for one have no time for the establishment, as I feel completely let down by the Queen when she failed to dissolve parliament when the disgraceful expenses scandal erruted. In my view she should have striped any MP involved of their title, and charged them with fraud. The houses of parliament should have been under state control, while a new government that is transparrent and with the best interests of the country formed, and free of corruption.

- To hell in a hand cart, England - The land of confusion!, 20/4/2011 18:59

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'Without counting that, in the crowd, there will be Pakistani immigrants, Africans the most enthusiastic perhaps.'.....I doubt it. We don't generally do crowds when we're abroad - not for this sort of thing, anyway. I hope to be watching the Royal wedding (with a reasonable amount of enthusiasm) from my sofa, as I have the luxury of working 9 to 5. I suspect a lot of my fellow immigrants will be taking advantage of the extra cash you can get for working shifts on Bank Holidays. God save the Queen.

- African expat in UK, Midlands, UK, 20/4/2011 17:37

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**-----"... at last the common man tells what many think... - nicky, kent,"-----> Martin Amis the 'common man'? You've given him something else to moan about now...

- John C, Rotherham S.Yorks, 20/4/2011 16:09

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Well said Mr Amis, get out while you still can, i did and it was the best thing i ever done, and all that you say concerning that family of parasites is right, in fact i would say that you never said enough about them. I class them as the biggest parasites in the world, i know an old lady who does a cleaning job on the side, she has to, to make ends meet, but if she was found to be fiddling the large ammount of 20 quid a week, she would be up in front of the judge and fined, that parasitic family are paid millions every year, (for what), for the stealing their families done hundreds of years ago, and even today, they are still at it, but this time they are stealing, and living the best of lives, once again of the backs of the poor people.

- mally, stockton england, 20/4/2011 11:38

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Amis is correct, the Queen lives in a 'little world of her own' and has no conception of money or how other people live, she is cosseted through and through. Philip is a bumbling old fool. Charles talks to his flowers, and Air-miles loves to use up taxpayers money, as for Edward, the Royal Woosie. Get rid of them all, turn Buck House into a Hotel and sell off all the estates and give the money to the exchequer.

- Mabel Thorpe, nr Skegness, Lincs, uk., 20/4/2011 09:43

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Yes, but all lefties do.

- B J Nicholson, Manchester, England, 20/4/2011 05:59

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I love my country. It's a lot of the people in it I hate. They are poisoning this beautiful land.

- Lou Stanley, London, 20/4/2011 00:04

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I used to be proud to be British but now it has been reduced to the fact of whether or not you posses a passport. I no longer call myself British. I now use the term English. My government and especially the last one have let me and our once proud country down abysmally. No wonder this man is so upset. Also the Royalty represent the days when Britain was a feudal society with lords and peons. It would appear we are expected to thank Royalty for stealing the land from previous generations of poor peasant farmers with their armies of mercenaries. Sorry that doesn't wash with me. Kings and Queens (In fact royalty as a whole) exist in the past. Time to move on and joint the 21st. century.

- John Preston, Stoke on Trent Staffs, 19/4/2011 23:28

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Lets be honest,the Royals are on the whole not the brightest,with few interests other than horses,dogs and shouting at the servants. Martin Amis is right,time to stop fawning over this disfunctional family.

- iain, cousley wood UK, 19/4/2011 23:14

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I agree with his every word, at last the common man tells what many think.these so called Royals are parasites.

- nicky, kent, 19/4/2011 21:06

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