

**“The project is to become an American novelist”:
Martin Amis’s special relationship with the United States**

By Richard Martin

Yellow Dog (2003), Martin Amis’s ninth and most recent novel, begins with the following passage:

But I go to Hollywood but I go to hospital, but you are the first but you are the last, but he is tall but she is small, but you stay up but you go down, but we are rich but we are poor, but they find peace but they find...¹

Here, the “Hollywood” in question may only be a cheap imitation, a London bar “set-dressed to resemble downtown Los Angeles,”² but in a writing career spanning more than thirty years, Martin Amis has frequently found himself going into Hollywood and, for that matter, exploring the rest of the United States. Indeed, just as any press conference held by the British Prime Minister and the President of the United States must, as a matter of protocol, now include a reference to the “special relationship,” it seems Martin Amis is unable to complete any interview or article without alluding to the modern American writers who have influenced him. This discussion, therefore, will consider the impact that novelists such as Saul Bellow, Philip Roth, Norman Mailer and Vladimir Nabokov have had on the work of Martin Amis – both thematically and, perhaps more notably, in Amis’s distinctive style, with its inventive language and transatlantic rhythms. Here, particular attention will be given to his seminal novel, *Money: A Suicide Note* (1984). Furthermore, these ideas will be examined in the light of the criticism that such American authors received from Martin Amis’s father, Kingsley Amis. As Gavin Keulks confirms, Kingsley and Martin Amis “furnish literary scholars with a unique and especially complex model of literary transmission and inheritance.”³

The introductory extract from *Yellow Dog* – with its juxtaposition of “first” and “last,” “tall” and “small” and so on – also points towards the key feature that characterises not only Martin Amis’s “special relationship” with America, but his writing as a whole – that is, an obsession with extremities, with the polarities of human appearance and behaviour. Moreover, the contrast between innocence and experience is a pervasive theme throughout his writing. America, as shall be demonstrated, appeals to Amis precisely because it offers him the chance to explore this extremism.

During a conference on British fiction in California in April 2000, Martin Amis claimed, “the project is to become an American novelist.”⁴ Zachary Leader maintains the comment was made “jokingly,”⁵ but this discussion will reveal just how close Amis may have come to achieving his goal.

¹ Martin Amis, *Yellow Dog* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

³ Gavin Keulks, *Father and Son: Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis and the British Novel Since 1950* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 29.

⁴ Cited in Zachary Leader, ‘Introduction’, Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*

**Martin and Kingsley Amis:
“What is this big deal about dads and sons?”**

Analysing a writer’s personal life to illuminate their work is a notoriously hazardous enterprise, but in the case of Martin Amis there are significant biographical reasons why his novels should exhibit such a fascination with the United States. First of all, as he explains in *The Moronic Inferno and Other Visits to America* (1986), he has a long-held family link with the country:

The academic year 1959-60 I spent as a ten-year-old resident of Princeton, New Jersey... Since that time I have spent at least another year [in America], on assignments. My mother lived in America for years, and many of my expatriate friends live in America now. My wife is American. Our infant son is half-American.⁶

Since this was published, Amis has added another half-American son, a new American wife, and two half-American daughters to his family. Yet, the most intriguing familial element in his development into “arguably the most American writer living in England today”⁷ concerns his father, Kingsley Amis. Martin Amis acknowledges the pair’s status as “a literary curiosity”⁸ and devotes much of his memoir, *Experience* (2000), to their relationship. Additionally, *Money* includes a wry acknowledgement of the attention the Amises provoke: “What is this big deal about dads and sons?”⁹

What is relevant to this discussion, however, are the opposing attitudes held by father and son towards American literature. As Keulks explains, their “artistic allegiances divide neatly along national lines.”¹⁰ Although towards the end of his life Kingsley Amis became crudely anti-American, he was previously sympathetic towards the United States. Indeed, during his time as Visiting Fellow at Princeton, he claimed, “the only unpleasant people I’ve met here have been English,”¹¹ and later he rejected his youthful Communist leanings and became a staunch supporter of America in the Cold War. Nevertheless, he remained markedly unimpressed with American writers, believing, “they show no signs of ever producing... a distinctively American literature.”¹² Nationality seems to be the main stumbling-block to realising this: Amis continues, “when *The Naked and the Dead* appeared, I thought someone the size of Dickens was among us; I had not allowed for the fact that Mailer was an American.”¹³ Furthermore, Kingsley singled out for severe criticism several authors who Martin has often praised: Philip Roth, for example, is described as “one of the unfunniest fellows

⁶ Martin Amis, ‘Introduction and Acknowledgements’, *The Moronic Inferno and Other Visits to America* [1986] (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 9.

⁷ Keulks, *Father and Son*, p. 34.

⁸ Martin Amis, *Experience* [2000] (London: Vintage, 2001), p. 7.

⁹ Martin Amis, *Money: A Suicide Note* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1984), p. 174.

¹⁰ Keulks, *Father and Son*, p. 35.

¹¹ ‘Letter to Robert Conquest’ [26 October 1958], in Zachary Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), p. 545.

¹² Kingsley Amis, ‘Sacred Cows’ [undated], *The Amis Collection: Selected Non-Fiction 1954-1990* (London: Hutchinson, 1990), p. 17.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 18. Elsewhere, Kingsley Amis refers to “Norman Maaaaghgh.” (‘Letter to Philip Larkin’ [18 December 1984], in Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis*, p. 989.)

in the world,”¹⁴ but the true vitriol is saved for his son’s “twin peaks.”¹⁵ “Americans have elevated Nabokov and Bellow, neither of whom writes English,”¹⁶ Kingsley asserts, before consolidating his argument:

Nabokov, in a way peculiar to foreigners, never stops showing off his mastery of the language; his books are jewels a hundred thousand words long. Bellow is a Ukrainian-Canadian, I believe. It is painful to watch him trying to pick his way between the unidiomatic on the one hand and the affected on the other.¹⁷

Kingsley was by no means unaware of his son’s literary tastes. In fact, this only increased his disdain for American novelists: “[Nabokov] is what’s wrong with half of US [writing] – there are other things wrong with the other half – and has fucked up a lot of fools here... including... my little Martin.”¹⁸

Martin Amis, by contrast, enjoys a huge affection for American literature, although it does not seem to have been in full bloom at the start of his career. In *The Rachel Papers* (1973), Amis’s intelligent and assured debut, the precocious narrator, Charles Highway, floods the narrative with literary references. Notably, though, Charles remains firmly rooted in the English Literary canon: Shakespeare, Blake, Austen, Lawrence. There are no mentions of the American writers that would come to dominate Amis’s later novels: in *The Information* (1995), for example, American fiction is Richard Tull’s “specialty and passion.”¹⁹ Amis’s adolescent letters included in *Experience* confirm that in his youth the author was more concerned by classic English literary texts: “I consider ‘Middlemarch’ to be FUCKING good – Jane Austen + passion + dimension. Very fine.”²⁰

**Martin Amis and Saul Bellow:
“Jesus, this guy talks more American than I do.”**

[I]t was [Christopher] Hitchens who introduced me to Bellow – as a reader... in (I think) 1977... after very few pages I felt a recognition threading itself through me, whose form of words (more solemn than exhilarated) went approximately as follows: ‘Here is a writer I will have to read all of.’²¹

Since discovering Saul Bellow’s work, Martin Amis has repeatedly championed it. Interestingly, while in 1982 he proclaimed a very Kingsley-esque view that, “*Augie March*... often resembles a lecture on destiny fed through a thesaurus of low-life patois,”²² by 1995 he maintained: “*The Adventures of Augie March* is the Great American Novel. Search no further.”²³ Elsewhere, he adds, “Saul Bellow really is a

¹⁴ Amis, ‘The Sound of Dying Laughter’ [1990], *The Amis Collection*, p. 174.

¹⁵ Amis, *Experience*, p. 119n.

¹⁶ Amis, ‘Sacred Cows’, *The Amis Collection*, p. 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ ‘Letter to Philip Larkin’ [22 March 1982], in Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis*, p. 938-939.

¹⁹ Martin Amis, *The Information* (New York: Harmony, 1995), p. 46.

²⁰ Amis, *Experience*, p. 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

²² Amis, ‘The Moronic Inferno’ [1982], *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 17.

²³ Martin Amis, ‘The American Eagle’ [1995], *The War Against Cliché: Essays and Reviews 1971-2000* [2001] (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 447.

great American writer... he is the writer that the twentieth century has been waiting for."²⁴

A full comparison of their novels would require a separate discussion, but it seems evident that Bellow's influence on Amis has manifested itself in two distinct ways: language and scope. Firstly, the urban speech rhythms that have come to characterise Amis's fiction, most notably in *Money*, require attention. John Self's willingness to combine traditional English speech with American slang ("Fear has really got the whammy on all of us down here. Oh it's true, man. Sister, don't kid yourself."²⁵) in a confident, exhilarating fashion can be traced back to the author, who, like his creation Augie March, learnt to "go at things as I have taught myself, free-style, and will make the record in my own way."²⁶ According to Richard Brown, *Money*'s language is "a carnivalised or comic tribute to the Chicago, urban 'high style' of Saul Bellow."²⁷ Amis includes a subtle acknowledgment of the inspiration behind the novel towards the conclusion of *Money*: "I am the express at the end of the dream. You sit in your train at the siding and look up startled from the page as I bellow by."²⁸ James Wood, however, is less than impressed with Amis's employment of his predecessor's style: "Amis has taken from Bellow what is most easily imitable... his streaming syntax and parenthetical interruptions, his boisterous plurals and compounds."²⁹ Of course, Saul Bellow's ability to incorporate an immigrant-American dialect in his novels was exactly the reason Kingsley Amis disliked them so much. Martin reiterates his father's complaint about Bellow and turns it into a positive attribute: "*Augie March* isn't written in English; its job is to make you feel how beautiful *American* is."³⁰

In fact, a closer study of *Money* reveals that Bellow may be entitled to echo Marvell Buzhardt's comment in *Dead Babies* (1975): "Jesus, this guy talks more American than I do."³¹ Amis is certainly as convinced as Bellow of the potential beauty of American speech. John Self, remembering his adolescent stay in the United States, admits, "I pitched my voice somewhere in the mid-Atlantic,"³² and this is a perfect description for the tone of the entire novel. Amis happily incorporates Americanisms into Self's narrative: "I came over, initialled the check and slipped the kid a buck."³³ References to "soccer"³⁴ and, more memorably, "my gum-coach"³⁵ (his hygienist), confirm this transatlantic dialect, but the text also satirises the speech of native Americans: "'Trust me, Slick. With Guyland in it, it respectabilizes the whole package."³⁶ Of course, being an exemplary post-modern author, Amis does not fail to point out his linguistic dexterity to the reader: discussing a screenplay, John Self explains, "'we need a writer who can speak American."³⁷ Later, Self hires "Martin

²⁴ Amis, 'Saul Bellow in Chicago' [1983], *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 200.

²⁵ Amis, *Money*, p. 9.

²⁶ Saul Bellow, *The Adventures of Augie March* [1953] (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 3.

²⁷ Richard Brown, 'Martin Amis', in Lesley Henderson (ed.), *Contemporary Novelists*, Fifth Edition (Chicago and London: St. James Press, 1991), p. 37.

²⁸ Amis, *Money*, p. 328.

²⁹ James Wood, 'Martin Amis: The English Imprisonment', *The Broken Estate: Essays in Literature and Belief* (London: Pimlico, 2000), p. 187.

³⁰ Amis, 'The American Eagle', *The War Against Cliché*, p. 467.

³¹ Martin Amis, *Dead Babies* [1975] (London: Penguin, 1984), p. 107-108.

³² Amis, *Money*, p. 196.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Amis” to re-write the script. Above all, Amis enjoys infusing American language, and especially slang, with a poetic quality that is often overlooked. Consider, for example, *Money*’s opening paragraph:

As my cab pulled off FDR Drive, somewhere in the early Hundreds, a low-slung Tomahawk full of black guys came sharking out of lane and sloped in fast right across our bows. We banked, and hit a deep welt or grapple-ridge in the road: to the sound of a rifle-shot the cab roof ducked down and smacked me on the core of my head. I really didn’t need that, I tell you, with my head and face and back and heart hurting a lot of the time anyway, and still drunk and crazed and ghosted from the plane.³⁸

This passage is a valuable illustration of many of Martin Amis’s stylistic quirks: the creation of appropriate brand names (“Tomahawk”), the repetition and exaggeration (“head and face and back and heart”), the informal, conspiratorial narrator (“I tell you”), the unusual verbs (“sharking”), and the hyphenated invention (“grapple-ridge”) selected for its aural pleasure. Most compelling, though, is the pace of the narrative: a relentless, invigorating display of, as James Diedrick describes it, “verbal artistry.”³⁹ Rivalling Amis for innovative prose, Eric Korn’s review of *Money* in the *Times Literary Supplement* praised the author’s “astonishing narrative voice... the jagged, spent, street-wise, gutterwise, guttural mid-Atlantic twang, the button-holing, earbending, lughole-jarring monologue.”⁴⁰ It is this style that caused Kingsley Amis so much distress. Martin explains, “what [Kingsley] dislikes about my prose is overkill,”⁴¹ a result, he believes, of constantly energetic writing.

Additionally, this “verbal artistry” emphasises that Martin Amis’s relationship with America and American writers is inextricably connected with his approach to literature. Amis is a writer obsessed by language, with its possibilities and delights, to the extent that even his polemic on Communism contains a criticism of its “metallic clichés, the formulas and euphemisms, the supposedly futuristic and time-thrifty acronyms and condensations.”⁴² Amis openly admits, “I would certainly sacrifice any psychological or realistic truth for a phrase, for a paragraph that has a spin on it: that sounds whorish, but I think it’s the higher consideration.”⁴³ The United States, with its adaptation of traditional English, provides Amis with an unrivalled opportunity to manipulate language. It also offers the prospect of comic comparisons: “It should be said that an asshole is not the same as an arsehole. An Atlantic divides them.”⁴⁴ Indeed, the writer himself places this idea at the forefront of his attraction to America:

³⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

³⁹ James Diedrick, *Understanding Martin Amis* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), p. 75.

⁴⁰ Eric Korn, ‘Frazzled Yob-Gene Lag-Jag’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 4252 (5 October 1984), cited in Nicolas Tredell (ed.), *The Fiction of Martin Amis: A Reader’s Guide to Essential Criticism* (Cambridge: Icon Books, 2000), p. 55.

⁴¹ John Haffenden, ‘Martin Amis’ [1984], *Novelists in Interview* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 16.

⁴² Martin Amis, *Koba The Dread: Laughter and The Twenty Million* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), p. 24. One of the most humorous sections of this earnest book concerns Communism and linguistics: “I groaned with deep recognition when I recently learned that [Lenin] couldn’t pronounce his r’s: not a good start, I think, for a Russian revolutionary.” (Ibid., p. 251.)

⁴³ Haffenden, ‘Martin Amis’, *Novelists in Interview*, p. 16.

⁴⁴ Amis, *The Information*, p. 95. This comment echoes a conversation in *Dead Babies*: “‘It’s arse, not ass,’ said Andy, rolling over. ‘Arse.’” (Amis, *Dead Babies*, p. 170.)

“I feel very North Atlantic... I feel much more strongly linked to America than to France, Spain or Italy, and the reason for the link is very simple: it is language.”⁴⁵

Martin Amis has also, as Keulks points out, “adopted an epic scope [from Bellow].”⁴⁶ This is especially apparent in the informal trilogy, *Money*, *London Fields* and *The Information*. Amis’s desire for broad, ambitious novels can be linked to a very American trend:

British critics tend to regard the American predilection for Big Novels as a vulgar neurosis – like the American predilection for big cars or big hamburgers... American novels are big all right, but partly because America is big too.⁴⁷

Money and *London Fields*, with their inventive transatlantic language, post-modern techniques and ambitious reach, are therefore described by Stephen Connor as addressing “the condition of England via flagrant violation of every requirement of the condition of England novel.”⁴⁸ It is notable that as Amis’s affection for American writing has grown, so has the length and ambition of his novels. Again, this idea places Martin Amis on the American side of the often heated literary debate with his father. Martin explains,

I think [Americans] are not annoyed by long books that splutter and sound off and are full of energy. These are the words that make my father’s head drop. He hates to hear that a novel is full of energy. I think he stands for a certain British taste there, but the Americans are quite happy with that.⁴⁹

There is one further feature of Martin Amis’s affiliation with Saul Bellow that demands attention: how the pair have formed an intimate personal relationship. Amis maintains that, “my feeling for him has always been based on – and formed and constantly refreshed by – literary admiration,”⁵⁰ yet he also directs the following statement to Bellow: “As long as you’re alive I’ll never feel entirely fatherless.”⁵¹ The comfort imparted by the American writer in the aftermath of Kingsley’s death provides *Experience*, as Keulks asserts, with a resolution of love that remains missing from any of Martin Amis’s novels. Given that Amis believes, “Bellow’s first name is a typo: that ‘a’ should be an ‘o’”⁵² perhaps more of those soulful qualities will seep into Amis’s fiction in the future.⁵³

⁴⁵ Christopher Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’ [1991], *Writers In Conversation: Volume One* (Norwich: EAS Publishing, 2000), p. 42.

⁴⁶ Keulks, *Father and Son*, p. 64.

⁴⁷ Amis, ‘The Moronic Inferno’, *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ Stephen Connor, *The English Novel in History 1950-1995* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 92.

⁴⁹ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’, *Writers In Conversation*, p. 42.

⁵⁰ Amis, *Experience*, p. 200.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

⁵² ‘Even Later’ [1997], *The War Against Cliché*, p. 327.

⁵³ Not everyone has been entirely pleased with Martin Amis and Saul Bellow’s friendship. Reviewing a BBC2 edition of *Bookmark* in which Amis interviewed Bellow, A. A. Gill complained that the pair “grinned and nodded and sent each other ‘love you to death’ vibes, while floating non-sequitur statements like little pink cupids.” (A. A. Gill, ‘Ready, Amis, Fire’, *The Sunday Times*, 2 August 1998.)

**Martin Amis, Philip Roth and Norman Mailer:
“You’re never *bored*, are you, when you’re always raring to fuck or fight.”**

Compared with his reverence of Saul Bellow, Martin Amis’s opinion of other American writers has been more ambiguous. Philip Roth’s *Portnoy’s Complaint* (1967), with its unflinching depiction of teenage sexuality (“If only I could cut down to one hand-job a day, or hold the line at two, or even three!”⁵⁴), evidently set the tone for much of the sexually explicit prose in *The Rachel Papers*: “I *did* masturbate about [my sister] – electrically – all through last Christmas holidays.”⁵⁵ Roth’s approach to sex, as well as his humour, has continued to interest and influence Amis. “Roth is a comic genius,”⁵⁶ he states, in exact opposition to his father’s judgment. Yet, Martin Amis also admits that he “hounded Philip Roth in his Zuckerman years,”⁵⁷ and one review early in Amis’s critical career summarises his frustrations with Roth’s limited fictional range: “There are, in short, people in the world other than middle-class Jewish Professors of English Literature... *enough with them already*.”⁵⁸

Likewise, Amis has not always held Norman Mailer’s work in high regard. He describes Mailer’s *An American Dream* (1965) as, “the prose of a man in transport, not of sexual excitement so much as the tizzy of false artistry.”⁵⁹ Yet, *An American Dream*, with its ultra-macho diet of sex and violence, offers a lucid parallel with the testosterone-heavy flavour of much of Martin Amis’s fiction. In *Money*, for example, John Self boasts, “I live like an animal – eating and drinking, dumping and sleeping, fucking and fighting – and that’s it. It’s survival.”⁶⁰ Similarly, in *Yellow Dog*, Amis writes, “you’re never *bored*, are you, when you’re always raring to fuck or fight.”⁶¹ Brutal, often unexplained violence is a common theme throughout Amis’s work: in *Dead Babies*, the hedonistic weekend is ended by the murderous antics of Quentin Villiers (or “Johnny”); in *The Information*, Richard Tull’s attempts to “fuck Gwyn up”⁶² only result in his own misfortune; and the entire plot of *Yellow Dog* hinges on the seemingly motiveless attack on Xan Meo in the first chapter. Compare this to the macho activities of *An American Dream*’s Stephen Rojak, who murders his wife and confesses, “I had not felt so nice since I was twelve,”⁶³ and then proceeds to have sex with the maid, although “I was ready to kill her easy as not,”⁶⁴ before later brawling with Shago and Kelly.

Amis and Mailer share a similar approach to sex, too. Gregory Riding’s exploits in *Success* (1978) are remarkably similar to Stephen Rojak’s in *An American Dream*:

⁵⁴ Philip Roth, *Portnoy’s Complaint* [1967] (London: Vintage, 1999), p. 19. Elaine Showalter takes an interest in Amis’s use of the expression “hand-job” in *Money*, claiming: “Amis could have used the British and Larkinesque term ‘wank’ [as he does in *The Rachel Papers*], but clearly prefers the American term... [which combines] the dehumanization of sex with a form of work.” (Elaine Showalter, ‘Lad Lit’, Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction*, p. 70.)

⁵⁵ Martin Amis, *The Rachel Papers* [1973] (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 15.

⁵⁶ Amis ‘Review of *The Counterlife*’ [1987], *The War Against Cliché*, p. 290.

⁵⁷ Amis, *Experience*, p. 176.

⁵⁸ Amis, ‘Review of *My Life as a Man*’ [1974], *The War Against Cliché*, p. 287.

⁵⁹ Amis, ‘Mailer: The Avenger and the Bitch’ [1982], *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 63.

⁶⁰ Amis, *Money*, p. 261.

⁶¹ Amis, *Yellow Dog*, p. 285.

⁶² Amis, *The Information*, p. 25.

⁶³ Norman Mailer, *An American Dream* [1965] (London: Flamingo, 1994), p. 35.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

After a perfectly civil, and in fact somewhat tedious, phased entry, I buggered her quite pitilessly for – oh – a good twenty-five minutes, wrenching at her hair whenever she made some coquettish attempt to wriggle free. Roots, roots. Why the bottom sheet was looking like a butcher’s apron by the time I flipped her on to her back, surged forward into the hot crush, and gouged myself empty to her screams.⁶⁵

I jammed up her ass and came as if I’d been flung across the room. She let out a cry of rage... It had been when all was said a bitch of a brawl.⁶⁶

Whilst discussing sodomy and literature in *London Fields*, the narrator claims, “As for the Americans, they *all* seemed to be interested in it.”⁶⁷ This particularly aggressive form of sexuality can be connected to the animal imagery employed by both Mailer and Amis. Deborah, for example, is depicted in *An American Dream* as, “a lioness of the species: unconditional surrender was her only raw meat.”⁶⁸ Equally, John Self in *Money* has “the face of a fat snake,”⁶⁹ and portrays New York as a jungle, swarming with “cros and dragons, [and] tiger fish.”⁷⁰ This need for primal images is confirmed by Amis’s remark that *Money*’s textual allusions to George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (1945) were included because he wanted “the animal imagery of the book.”⁷¹

Jean Radford asserts that Norman Mailer considers “violence and perversions... as the American way of life.”⁷² Furthermore, John Updike explains why extremity – in all its forms – seems to be much more commonplace in American novels than their British counterparts:

It comes down to the British conception of fiction as a social act. One does not do in fiction things one might not do in a parlour. Certain rules of decorum and restraint [exist] in the relationship between the writer and the reader. I don’t think an American has that notion.⁷³

By comparing Martin Amis’s work with Norman Mailer, it becomes very clear that Amis has followed the more radical path laid down by modern, male American authors. Amis frequently ignores the usual boundaries of taste to explore the most extreme human behaviour. The explicit sexual prose of novels such as *The Rachel Papers* and *Success* – in the latter, incest is a significant factor – has been combined with investigations into pornography, most recently in a long piece of journalism entitled ‘A Rough Trade’ (2001), which undoubtedly supplied much of the research for the satire of Hollywood’s porn scene in *Yellow Dog*. Furthermore, Amis has been unafraid to tackle other extreme subjects: nuclear weapons are the principle theme of the short-story collection, *Einstein’s Monsters* (1987), while the Holocaust is the

⁶⁵ Martin Amis, *Success* [1978] (New York: Vintage International, 1991), p. 136.

⁶⁶ Mailer, *An American Dream*, p. 47.

⁶⁷ Martin Amis, *London Fields* [1989] (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 68.

⁶⁸ Mailer, *An American Dream*, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Amis, *Money*, p. 14.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁷¹ Haffenden, ‘Martin Amis’, *Novelists in Interview*, p. 23.

⁷² Jean Radford, *Norman Mailer: A Critical Study* (London and Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1975), p. 34.

⁷³ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with John Updike’ [1989], *Writers in Conversation*, p. 360.

focus of *Time's Arrow, or The Nature of the Offence* (1991). Similarly, Norman Mailer has approached important socio-historical events in his work, examining the lives of both Marilyn Monroe and Lee Harvey Oswald. Indeed, it could be argued that many of Martin Amis's concerns – sex, violence, masculinity, the Holocaust, nuclear weapons, Communism – are very much American obsessions of the last fifty years.

What is clear, however, is that while Amis evidently feels an affinity with the way American writers have tackled extreme subjects, he also maintains a distance from them. Updike, for example, may have taken sexual honesty beyond the pale: “the textual contrast between your first and second wife’s pubic hair, for instance, is something most writers feel their readers can get along without.”⁷⁴ It is also worth observing that whereas Rojak’s macho behaviour is depicted as heroic, John Self is a much more pathetic figure, as Andrew Calcutt notes, “a very British failure, wallowing in self-doubt in a way that is truly un-American.”⁷⁵ As for Norman Mailer, Amis’s view is more problematic. Whilst his books are “sublime, ridiculous, always interesting,” Amis dismisses Mailer’s personal life – often conducted in public – as “a monotonous disgrace.”⁷⁶ Perhaps because his own high-profile lifestyle has often resulted in similar accusations – he was labelled “Britain’s Brat of Letters”⁷⁷ – Amis is keen to distance himself from Mailer’s controversial antics: “like America, he went too far in all directions.”⁷⁸ Amis himself, though, offers an alternative explanation for his rather unsympathetic stance towards both Norman Mailer and Philip Roth: looking back on his literary criticism in the collection, *The War Against Cliché*, he confesses, “I am also struck by how hard I sometimes was on those writers who (I erroneously felt) were trying to influence me: Roth, Mailer, Ballard.”⁷⁹ It seems particularly true that Amis has been unwilling to acknowledge the inspiration he has garnered from Mailer.

**Martin Amis’s America:
“America is more like a world than a country.”**

The themes that provoke Martin Amis’s stance on Norman Mailer – sex, violence, extremity, a simultaneous attraction and revulsion – are echoed in how he depicts Americans in his novels and in the attitude of his British characters towards the United States as a whole. If, as Amis himself declares, “the way a writer names his characters provides a good index to the way he sees the world – to his reality-level, his responsiveness to the accidental humour and freakish poetry of life,”⁸⁰ what do the names of his own American creations tell us about the way he sees the United States?

DeForest Hoeniger in *The Rachel Papers* is the first example of a phenomenon that reoccurs throughout Amis’s work: the exotically-named American. Other instances include Skip Marshall and Marvell Buzhardt in *Dead Babies*, and *Money’s Day Lightbowne*, Sunny Wand and Chip Fournaki. John Self defends Spunk Davis by arguing, “lots of Americans are called things like that. They’ve all got names like

⁷⁴ Martin Amis, ‘John Updike’ [1987], *Visiting Mrs Nabokov and Other Excursions* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p. 51.

⁷⁵ Andrew Calcutt, *Brit Cult: An A-Z of British Pop Culture* (London: Prion Books, 2000), p. 26.

⁷⁶ Amis, ‘Mailer: The Avenger and the Bitch’, *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 73.

⁷⁷ Charles Michner, ‘Britain’s Brat of Letters’, *Esquire*, January 1987, p. 108.

⁷⁸ Amis, ‘Mailer: The Avenger and the Bitch’, *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 73.

⁷⁹ Amis, ‘Foreword’, *The War Against Cliché*, p. xv.

⁸⁰ Amis, ‘The Moronic Inferno’, *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 13.

Orifice and Handjob. They don't notice. They think it's cool."⁸¹ These bizarre names obviously provide Amis with a great of enjoyment, and they also combine his love of language with a suggestion that Americans are a colourful, slightly ludicrous breed.

Yet, associations of sex, mystery and glamour surround America in Amis's fiction. In *The Rachel Papers*, DeForest extends the allure of his unusual name with an ostentatious wealth (he picks up Rachel in a Jaguar), and when Charles is trying to impress girls, he plays American music: "*Heroin* by the Velvet Underground."⁸² The American guests in *Dead Babies* are the most sexually adventurous: "The Americans constituted a 'triad', a 'troy' which meant, more or less, that they got to fuck and bugger one another indiscriminately."⁸³ This is met by their British counterparts with a mixture of fear, awe and disdain, as the following conversation between Quentin and Andy reveals:

'[T]hey're generally so... so different, don't you feel?'
'The fuck, they're just American, that's all.'⁸⁴

Andy's dismissive attitude is reiterated in the very British air of superiority that often creeps into Amis's work, especially his early novels. In *Success*, Gregory Riding is the perpetrator: "A middle-aged American couple – they *had* to be American: how else the matching Pickwickian check of their trousers? – wheeled about arm in arm, looking for a sign."⁸⁵ Even the yobbish John Self believes that, "speaking as an Englishman, one of the pluses of New York is that it makes you feel surprisingly well-educated and upper-class."⁸⁶ His obvious pleasure at New York's assortment of attractions goes hand in hand with a suggestion that he is above the ridiculous nature of what goes on: "You can't afford to find a mere oddity funny. Hence the sense-of-humour problem. If you had one, you'd be weeping with laughter all the hours there are."⁸⁷ This condescension is present in *The Rachel Papers* as well, where Charles, ridiculing DeForest, takes on the persona of sneering sophisticate:

He was American. You could tell that at once, because in common with every American over eight and under twenty-five, he looked like a middle-aged American sportswriter: freckled pin-head, cropped salt-and-pepper hair.⁸⁸

Amis's début features an intriguing transatlantic clash, placing the charismatic and precocious narrator in direct competition with DeForest for the affections of Rachel. Charles's 'victory' – he both seduces and then dismisses Rachel – seems, therefore, to signal a symbolic triumph for British wit and experience over American swagger, especially as DeForest is reduced to a rather pathetic figure, crying in Rachel's arms

⁸¹ Amis, *Money*, p. 233.

⁸² Amis, *The Rachel Papers*, p. 52.

⁸³ Amis, *Dead Babies*, p. 64.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

⁸⁵ Amis, *Success*, p. 181.

⁸⁶ Amis, *Money*, p. 24-25. Richard Brown points out that, given his transatlantic background and appalling behaviour, it would probably come as a relief to an American reader to discover that Self refers to himself as an Englishman. (Richard Brown, 'Postmodern Americas in the Fiction of Angela Carter, Martin Amis and Ian McEwan', cited in Tredell, *The Fiction of Martin Amis*, p. 59.)

⁸⁷ Amis, *Money*, p. 280.

⁸⁸ Amis, *The Rachel Papers*, p. 49.

by the novel's conclusion. Charles's anti-Americanism is summed up in the following tirade, which contains ideas that Amis has extended throughout his career:

‘Americans will always be hell no matter who’s governing them... Because they’re violent. Because they only like extremes. Even the rural people, the old reactionaries in the farms, go out blowing niggers’ heads off, roast a Jew or two, disembowel a Puerto Rican. Even the hippies are all eating and mass-murdering each other. The generations of T-bone steak and bully-beef, as if they’re doing a genetics experiment on themselves. No wonder they’re so violent, with bodies like theirs. It’s like being permanently armed... And I hate them because they’re so big and sweaty. I hate their biceps and their tans and their perfect teeth and their clear eyes...’⁸⁹

However, while Amis's British characters may hold a patronising outlook towards Americans, they are living in a country that, in Nick Hornby's words, is becoming “a dour and tacky version of America, with the McDonald's and the shopping malls, but without the volume or the delirium or the showmanship.”⁹⁰ This is reflected in *Yellow Dog's* “Hollywood” bar, and, in a typically Amis-esque piece of exaggeration, John Self notices the changing make-up of London's streets:

There used to be a third-generation Italian restaurant across the road... It's now a Burger Den. There is already a Burger Hutch on the street. There is a Burger Shack, too, and a Burger Bower.⁹¹

Indeed, John Self's home city is an incredibly depressing sight: “Blasted, totalled, broken-winded, shot-faced London, doing time under sodden skies.”⁹² Elsewhere, England's capital is said to resemble “an old man with bad breath.”⁹³

Contrast this with New York, where Self drools over “the energy, the electricity of the place, all the hustle and razz.”⁹⁴ Later, he eulogises Manhattan's “dense variety... After this, London feels watery and sparse.”⁹⁵ Amis has commented that, “I think one is attracted towards the centre of the earth, which is really, culturally, America,”⁹⁶ and in *Money*, there can be no doubt that he sees New York as the centre of the United States: “Heat, money, sex and fever – this is it, this is New York, this is first class, this is the sharp end.”⁹⁷ Still, for all its palpable excitement, the New York of *Money* is a loud, dangerous, extreme environment, a city simultaneously hazardous and hilarious: “the ragged hoot of sirens, the whistles of two-wheelers and skateboarders, pogoists, gocarters, windersurfers.”⁹⁸ Self concludes, “You *can* buy

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 107.

⁹⁰ Nick Hornby, *31 Songs* (London: Viking, 2003), p. 84.

⁹¹ Amis, *Money*, p. 72.

⁹² Ibid., p. 153.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 85.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 96.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

⁹⁶ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’, *Writers in Conversation*, p. 42.

⁹⁷ Amis, *Money*, p. 51.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

stress... It's New York, I reckon,"⁹⁹ a feeling confirmed by *The Information*: "New York was the most violent thing man had ever done to a stretch of land."¹⁰⁰

Impossible as it may seem, Amis manages to generate a setting even more extreme than New York. Los Angeles may not share the fiscal or political influence of its East Coast rival, but, in *Money* and *Yellow Dog*, it manages to trump it for sheer lunacy. Self's depiction of California is, in Elaine Showalter's opinion, "a miniature verbal wonder that ranges in its rhythms from Nabokov to Jagger."¹⁰¹ Certainly, it positions Los Angeles as a city like no other:

This restaurant serves no drink, this one serves no meat, this one serves no heterosexuals. You can your chimp shampooed, you can get your dick tattooed, twenty-four hour, but can you get lunch?¹⁰²

Xan Meo's trip to Hollywood coincides with the presence of the "Sextown Sniper," a phrase that combines the area's predilection for pornography and violence. Despite the liberal attitude towards sex in Los Angeles, Meo hears a story about "the English journalist who was recently arrested and jailed for smoking a cigarette in his room."¹⁰³ This is a city where traditional rules do not apply, where morality has been reversed.

Extremes underpin Martin Amis's obsession with the United States – that and the nation's sheer size ("America is more like a world than a country"¹⁰⁴) and the comic possibilities that offers. "I am fascinated by what I deplore and I deplore what fascinates me,"¹⁰⁵ he states. Equally, John Self pleads, "If only I could run away from America,"¹⁰⁶ and it is as if both author and narrator understand that the United States is a highly addictive drug, exerting a relentless pull on their lives. When, in the final stages of *Money*, Self writes, "*I ought not to go to America. But I don't want to go to America. I can't afford to go to America,*"¹⁰⁷ it sounds as if he is holding an argument with an invisible presence. It is tempting to suggest that Martin Amis has had a similar debate with himself – given the constant speculation about him possibly moving to America. Perhaps, he is mindful of "what America is capable of doing to British writers."¹⁰⁸ What seems more certain is that his depiction of American cities – enthralling, intense, full of risks – mirrors his opinion of American writers.

Martin Amis and Vladimir Nabokov: "Style is morality."

With the possible exception of Saul Bellow, Vladimir Nabokov has excited Martin Amis like no other writer – American or otherwise. As with Bellow, the admiration has taken on a personal aspect: although Amis never met Nabokov himself, he has visited both his wife and son, and from his *Letters*, Amis concludes, "It is clear... that Nabokov was a delightful man: loyal, generous, affectionate, and wonderfully

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 180.

¹⁰⁰ Amis, *The Information*, p. 221.

¹⁰¹ Showalter, 'Lad Lit', Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction*, p. 67.

¹⁰² Amis, *Money*, p. 161.

¹⁰³ Amis, *Yellow Dog*, p. 287.

¹⁰⁴ Amis, 'Introduction', *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Haffenden, 'Martin Amis', *Novelists in Interview*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Amis, *Money*, p. 329.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 358. (Author's italics)

¹⁰⁸ Amis, *The Information*, p. 249.

funny.”¹⁰⁹ In *Experience*, he is described as, “the noble Nabokov, in whose veins raced the grape blood of emperors.”¹¹⁰ In literary terms, Amis has concentrated the majority of his praise on *Lolita* (1955), thus symbolically challenging his father’s “wilfully philistine review”¹¹¹ of the novel. Martin Amis writes, “In a sense *Lolita* is too great for its own good. It rushes up on the reader like a recreational drug more powerful than any yet discovered or devised.”¹¹² Kingsley Amis, though, took objection to both the exotic style (which he memorably described as “flim flam”¹¹³) and provocative content of *Lolita*, and believed the novel was morally reprehensible. This led his son into one of the most important definitions of his own literary ethnics he has ever presented:

Style *is* morality: morality detailed, configured, intensified. It’s not in the mere narrative arrangement of good and bad that morality makes itself felt. It can be there in every sentence. To Kingsley, though, sustained euphony automatically became euphemism: always.¹¹⁴

This complements other remarks Martin Amis has made – “style is not an icing, it is an ingredient, perhaps the main ingredient”¹¹⁵ – and offers not just an explanation for his admiration of Nabokov (who had “an absolute trust in style”¹¹⁶), but a justification of his own writing. As Keulks points out, Amis has gained a love for “formal artistry and verbal gamesmanship”¹¹⁷ from Nabokov. In *Money*, for example, John Self’s combination of a grotesque life and a flamboyant manner of writing harks back to the sly joke of Nabokov’s most famous creation, Humbert Humbert: “You can always count on a murderer for a fancy prose style.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the way in which a reader is implicated in the narrative of *Lolita* (“Ladies and gentleman of the jury”¹¹⁹) is echoed in the playful, conspiratorial nature of much of John Self’s prose: “This writer’s name, they tell me, is *Martin Amis*. Never heard of him. Do *you* know his stuff at all?”¹²⁰ Kingsley Amis, by contrast, found all this post-modern trickery to be exceedingly irritating: “I don’t know about you but I can’t bear anything, even stream of conc. [*sic*], better than realising there’s a narrator here whom I can’t trust.”¹²¹

To other critics of his work, Martin Amis has often been taken to represent a preference for ‘style over content’, a paradigm of the same greedy and slick 1980s lifestyle he portrays in *Money*. His arch, highly stylised and often comic depiction of low-life characters – Self and *London Fields*’s Keith Talent being the best two examples – results in James Wood describing him as, “too clever. He is always an adjective ahead of his subjects; always an adjective ahead of wonderment... Amis’s

¹⁰⁹ Amis, ‘Review of *Vladimir Nabokov: Selected Letters 1940-1977*’ [1990], *The War Against Cliché*, p. 257.

¹¹⁰ Amis, *Experience*, p. 119.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 121n.

¹¹² Martin Amis, ‘Nabokov’s Grand Slam’ [1992], *The War Against Cliché*, p. 471.

¹¹³ Amis, *Experience*, p. 121n.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’, *Writers in Conversation*, p. 31.

¹¹⁶ Amis, ‘Review of *Nabokov: Selected Letters*’, *The War Against Cliché*, p. 260.

¹¹⁷ Keulks, *Father and Son*, p. 64.

¹¹⁸ Vladimir Nabokov, *Lolita* [1955] (New York: Vintage International, 1997), p. 9.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ Amis, *Money*, p. 73.

¹²¹ ‘Letter to Philip Larkin’ [22 March 1982], in Leader (ed.), *The Letters of Kingsley Amis*, p. 939.

greatest weakness as a writer is not that he is not innocent enough, but that he is too knowing.”¹²² Wood’s statement provokes discussion about a wider theme that encompasses Amis’s fiction, its relationship with the United States and his respect for Nabokov – that of innocence and experience.

Innocence is, without doubt, a crucial theme in Martin Amis’s writing. The author’s memoir can be seen as a 400-page journey, the transformation from an unawakened to an experienced self. In his novels, Amis confirms that innocence is the value against which his comedy is played.¹²³ John Self and Keith Talent, despite their often disgraceful antics, remain unaware of the greater forces controlling their lives. Self is duped by “Martin Amis,” despite the writer offering huge hints about his destiny and explanations for his predicament: “characters have a double innocence. They don’t know why they’re living through what they’re living through. They don’t even know they’re alive.”¹²⁴ Amis’s preoccupation with innocence extends into his discussions on childhood and paedophilia. In *Money*, Self confesses, “I once had a crush on Alex Llewellyn’s nine-year-old daughter... It was erotic all right (I loved her touch).”¹²⁵ The subject reappears in *Yellow Dog*, as the assault on Xan Meo causes his relationship with his young daughters to take a sinister turn. The conclusion of that novel, with Xan comforting Sophie while considering her “very small size,”¹²⁶ leaves a reader with a final image of the fragility and innocence of childhood – a contrast with much of what has occurred in the text before. As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst verifies, in *Yellow Dog*, “‘innocence’ is a word which tolls like a bell.”¹²⁷ Amis considers his own brushes with paedophiles in *Experience*, before concluding, “paedophiles hate children. They hate children because they hate innocence, and children *are* innocence.”¹²⁸

Paedophilia is, of course, the main backdrop to Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*. Here, Humbert offers the narrative as, if not a proof of his innocence, then as a record of his desires. The idea of innocence also connects *Lolita* with *Money*. According to Matthew Dessem, John Self is “Humbert Humbert minus both culture and restraint,”¹²⁹ although how much restraint Humbert shows is debatable. Still, it is true that both Humbert and Self represent a form of European experience which is then fused with a traditionally American idea of innocence. Indeed, along with those two fictional characters, Martin Amis himself could be said to be complete a trio: in his various transatlantic sojourns, Amis has taken a very British sense of irony to explore a country which, “like *Lolita* ... is above all *young*.”¹³⁰ America’s relationship with innocence has become increasingly problematic: a comparatively youthful nation – certainly compared with Britain – it promotes the virtuous, perhaps naïve ideals of its ‘Founding Fathers’, and persists with a rather juvenile belief in ‘The American Dream’. Yet, the nation is also inextricably linked with violence – from its bloody establishment and brutal Civil War, to its liberal gun laws and continuing military power. As Humbert discovered, *Lolita*, like America, had a tarnished childhood: “I

¹²² Wood, ‘Martin Amis: The English Imprisonment’, *The Broken Estate*, p. 192-193.

¹²³ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’, *Writers in Conversation*, p. 24.

¹²⁴ Amis, *Money*, p. 245.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

¹²⁶ Amis, *Yellow Dog*, p. 339.

¹²⁷ Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘Dickens with a Snarl’, *The Observer*, 24 August 2003.

¹²⁸ Amis, *Experience*, p. 141.

¹²⁹ Matthew Dessem, ‘The Artist *Manqué*: Nabokovian techniques in *Money*’ [December 1997], posted at <http://martinamis.albion.edu/artist.htm>

¹³⁰ Amis, ‘Nabokov’s Grand Slam’, *The War Against Cliché*, p. 482.

was not even her first lover.”¹³¹ Martin Amis’s America is losing her purity, too: in *London Fields*, Guy Clinch has “a sense, as you were bound to have in America now, of how a whole continent had been devoured, used up, chewed up.”¹³² Amis’s overt self-consciousness may prohibit his writing from obtaining an innocent quality, but he has continued to investigate the concept of innocence throughout his career. Besides, if Amis wanted to use America to explore extremes, he may well have discovered the ultimate polarity: a country founded on virtue sinking into sin.

Conclusion:

“I’m from the wrong side of the Atlantic. I’m from London, England.”

In a summary of Martin Amis’s relationship with American novelists, Gavin Keulks asserts that, “Martin’s contrarian reworking of his father’s norms was both calculated and direct, a revaluation aimed to legitimise Martin’s own techniques within the Amis family tradition.”¹³³ Moreover, he is said to have “*intentionally embraced*, as surrogate literary fathers, the very writers who most irritated his father.”¹³⁴ Whilst it is true, as Keulks also sets out, that “it is difficult to view [Kingsley and Martin’s] arguments... as exclusively intellectual, disconnected from the unavoidable emotional impact,”¹³⁵ it is also apparent that Martin Amis’s association with writers such as Bellow, Roth, Mailer and Nabokov is based on much more than a simple family feud. Of course, as a young writer Martin Amis was undoubtedly keen to establish his own identity, to move away from the work of a previous generation – symbolised by his father – to create new modes of expression. However, it is equally true that this transition took place at a time when both American culture and American writers increased in prominence in Britain. Contrasted with a rather stale post-war Britain, the United States seemed fresh and exciting. As John Self admits, “When I first came to New York even a traffic jam was interesting.”¹³⁶ This unavoidably meant that American novelists would take on an added attraction. By way of confirmation, Martin Amis outlines the socio-historical factors behind his passion for American literature:

Nineteenth-century England was the time of our big novels, our centre of the world novels, our time of imperial confidence. That has shifted to America and I cold-bloodedly and selfishly think, I want some of that, I want that attitude that is no longer appropriate to England.¹³⁷

Martin Amis’s own preoccupations – both stylistically and thematically – have, therefore, developed alongside this obsession with the United States. This accounts for the sense of displacement that pervades much of his work – like John Self, Amis is “from the wrong side of the tracks. I’m from the wrong side of the Atlantic. I’m from

¹³¹ Nabokov, *Lolita*, p. 135.

¹³² Amis, *London Fields*, p. 422.

¹³³ Keulks, *Father and Son*, p. 64.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 232. (My italics)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹³⁶ Amis, *Money*, p. 103.

¹³⁷ Bigsby, ‘In Conversation with Martin Amis’, *Writers in Conversation*, p. 42

London, England.”¹³⁸ America both fascinates and repulses Amis, but worse than confronting this colossal subject would be the feeling that he had missed out on where the excitement, the real action of his generation was taking place. “I feel fractionally American myself,”¹³⁹ Amis claims, and it becomes apparent that he may well have completed a far more interesting project than the one he set himself: instead of merely becoming an *American* novelist, he holds a position as a uniquely *transatlantic* one.

¹³⁸ Amis, *Money*, p. 305.

¹³⁹ Amis, ‘The Moronic Inferno’, *The Moronic Inferno*, p. 9.

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