

You are going to listen to a radio programme where a psychologist is interviewed.

1) Fill in the gaps with the words you hear in the interview. (0,5)

- 1.1. There is some evidence that funny people have higher.....(0.1)
- 1.2. There are three major ones and they are all very old, incredibly old theories, going back to ancient Rome and ancient ..... in some cases (0.1)
- 1.3. So there is that view that every joke in some way has a ....., and often that's a way in which, again, we try and demonstrate superiority over others (0.1)
- 1.4. So we will .....or we will laugh or we will ridicule, say, a political opponent or a representative of a political party that we don't like (0.1)
- 1.5. ...which is the use of humour specifically to provide no benefit to other people, so it's using humour as a .....(0.1)

Answer the questions. (1,25)

- 2.1. What can you discover if you take a look at lonely hearts adverts? (0.25)
  - 2.2. Why does the psychologist mention two firemen to explain the “incongruity theory”? (0.25)
  - 2.3. What philosophers exposed the “superiority theory”? (0.25)
  - 2.4. Why is Joe Biden mentioned in the conversation? Which speech impediment is pointed out? (0.25)
  - 2.5. According to the humour styles questionnaire designed by Rod Martin from the University of Western Ontario, there are four main types or styles of humour. Mention two of them (0.25).
- 2) Briefly outline (no more than 250 words) the content of the conversation you've just listened to. (0.75)



## “AMIS, HITCHENS AND LARKIN: BAD BEHAVIOUR AND A MESSY PERSONAL LIFE WERE ONCE A GIFT FOR AUTHORS. NOT ANY MORE”

Flaws used to feed their sales but now writers are expected to be saints. “As you get older you realise that all these things – prizes, reviews, advances, readers – it's all **showbiz**, and the real action starts with your obituary.”

**Martin Amis first started spinning in favour of his future obituarists in 2003 – at the juncture, post Yellow Dog, at which prizes, reviews, advances and readers began to turn against him.** He knew both things would play out. After two decades of the literary world quiet quitting Martin Amis, there has been a sudden rehabilitation. In the past week the pages of obituary sections have exploded with a strangely pre-2003 phenomenon – a **semi-tolerant fascination** with Amis's personal life, and the way it may have bled into his work, and vice versa.

There is a nostalgia to those pieces: they strike the reader as missives from another age. What used to be a staple of literary culture – a sort of relaxed curiosity towards the proclivities of writer, their outrageous love affairs, their bad political opinions – is now really only to be found in obituaries sections. Before 2003, or thereabouts, was a long era in which **flawed personalities** were routinely sold a spart of the package: writers and artists and rock stars shored up their place in the firmament by revealing or cultivating a complicated life. Martin Amis, Christopher Hitchens, Philip Larkin: the lothario, the drunken **raconteur**, the recluse. The image fed the fame, which fed the sales. Gossip-informed readers enjoyed speculating about the points at which fact met fiction – who had inspired what? Were you really a writer if you didn't live like one? But things have changed.

We still obsess over difficult artists in prestige films – from a minimum distance of 50 years or so. But for our current crop of writers, painters, musicians and the rest, personality is out of fashion. In fact, those we hold up as cultural icons must now live the blameless apolitical lives of minor royals. Any hint of deviation from the head boy or girl act can inflict terrible harm – once you have **been shunned** by a small group on Twitter, you should start worrying your publishers will be next.

**Few writers with messy lives or offbeat opinions now top bestseller lists.** There are no Ernest Hemingways or Ted Hugheses. The “**imperfect**” and the “**complex**” are celebrated more loudly than ever, but only in promotional press releases for the novels. **Under the many watchful eyes on social media, the swaggeringly counter-cultural life is entirely off limits – in fact most so-called scandals now involve a slip-up, or a crack in a careful persona.** Sally Rooney, who lives quietly, once said something political, which was a mistake, and has complained about fame, which didn't go down well either. Lena Dunham, celebrated for her flawed characters, was deserted by fans for revealing various (rather similar) flaws herself. They had



never liked her work after all, former devotees started saying – in fact she was a bad writer. And her characters were **unlikeable** too.

There is Taylor Swift, who is currently suffering a sort of **sexually transmitted blow-back**: her crime is to date a controversial singer. And there is the celebrity philosopher Agnes Callard, who was recently revealed not only to have left her husband for a student, but to now be living with both of them. In the course of a long profile in the *New Yorker*, she theorised about the philosophical implications of the love triangle – as a three, “they would all keep talking about philosophy, but with fresh ideas in the mix”. What will one day delight obituarists disgusted *New Yorker* readers: she was universally condemned.

It is probably worth asking if the gender of today’s cultural stars has something to do with it. They are no longer overwhelmingly male, particularly in the literary world (on *Granta*’s list of best young British novelists last month just one in five were men).

Are we witnessing sexism: the expectation that women, however talented, must always be on their best behaviour? This is probably part of it, although men are treated the same way these days: Will Self, who is alleged to have treated his ex-wife appallingly, has suffered **a tarnishing of his literary brand**. And there are counter examples. You think of Iris Murdoch’s adulterous bed hopping, or Doris Lessing abandoning her two children, or Joni Mitchell putting her child up for adoption, and wonder if this would be tolerated among new authors and celebrities in 2023. (Lena Dunham, after all, was cancelled for adopting a rescue dog then changing her mind).

There seems to be something broader going on. Where once the talented artist was forgiven almost anything, we are now in a period of overcorrection. “A man must be a very great genius to make up for being such a loathsome human being,” Martha Gellhorn once said. We no longer accept the trade-off. In fact, in a surfeit of egalitarianism, we now seem to require geniuses to behave better than the rest of us.

It is good news, of course, that talented monsters aren’t given the free pass they once were. **The period of history in which someone could dodge prison if they were a dab hand with a paintbrush is thankfully over. But I worry we have swung into an era in which likeability comes first and talent later.** It is not a coincidence that original thinkers have often dodged conformity – moral or otherwise. Not every prodigy is also a prefect.

Martha Gill. “*The Guardian*”

### QUESTIONS (4,5)

- 1) Briefly classify the text according to its typology, genre and style. Justify your answer. (0,3)
- 2) Explain what alliteration is and find an example in the text. (0,2)
- 3) Which idea is the author trying to convey in this paragraph: “**Martin Amis first started spinning in favour of his future obituarists in 2003 – at the juncture, post Yellow Dog, at which prizes, reviews, advances and readers began to turn against him**”? (0,5)
- 4) Explain the meaning conveyed by these phrases or words in the text: (0,5)
  - a. **semi-tolerant fascination**
  - b. **flawed personalities**
  - c. **been shunned**
  - d. **sexually transmitted blow-back**
  - e. **a tarnishing of his literary brand**
- 5) Taking the words “**obituarist**” and “**raconteur**” into account, explain what type of words they are and the influence of their original languages into English (0,5)
- 6) What type of word formation processes have these words from the text undergone? (0,3)
  - a. **Showbiz**
  - b. **Unlikeable**
  - c. **Blow-back**
- 7) Explain the meaning of the use of inverted commas in the words “**imperfect**” and “**complex**”. (0,2)
- 8) Who is Doris Lessing? Why is she mentioned in the text? (0,5)
- 9) What is the grammatical function of “speculating” in “Gossip-informed readers enjoyed speculating about the points at which fact met fiction”. (0,25).



- 10) Which is the main communicative function of language the writer is exploiting in these extracts? (0,75)
- Few writers with messy lives or offbeat opinions now top bestseller lists**
  - The period of history in which someone could dodge prison if they were a dab hand with a paintbrush is thankfully over.**
  - I worry we have swung into an era in which likeability comes first and talent later.**
- 11) The New Yorker is an American weekly magazine featuring journalism, commentary, criticism, essays, fiction, satire, cartoons, and poetry. Mention and explain the content of, at least, three daily newspapers, tabloids or magazines in USA. (0,3)
- 12) Explain the author's intention when using this sentence: **“Under the many watchful eyes on social media, the swaggeringly counter-cultural life is entirely off limits – in fact most so-called scandals now involve a slip-up, or a crack in a careful persona”**. (0,2)

### TRADUCCIÓN DIRECTA (1,5)

I called the project a book, but in fact it wasn't a book at all. Working with yellow legal pads, loose sheets of paper, the backs of envelopes and junk-mail form letters for credit cards and home-improvement loans, I was compiling what amounted to a collection of random jottings, a hodgepodge of unrelated anecdotes that I would throw into a cardboard box each time another story was finished. There was little method to my madness. Some of the pieces came to no more than a few lines, and a number of them, in particular the spoonerisms and malapropisms I was so fond of, were just a single phrase. Chilled grease burger instead of grilled cheeseburger, for example, which came out of my mouth sometime during my junior year of high school, or the unintentionally profound, quasi-mystical utterance I delivered to Edith while we were engaged in one of our bitter marital spats: 'I'll see it when I believe it. Every time I sat down to write, I would begin by closing my eyes and letting my thoughts wander in any direction they chose. By forcing myself to relax in this way, I managed to dredge up considerable amounts of material from the distant past, things that until then I had assumed were lost forever.'

*Brooklyn Follies, Paul Auster, 2005*

### TRADUCCIÓN INVERSA (1.5)

Su padre, Ramón, el conserje, era veterano de la guerra de Cuba, donde había perdido una mano y (se rumoreaba con cierta malicia) el testículo derecho de un perdigonazo disparado por el mismísimo Theodore Roosevelt en la carga de Cochinos. Convencido de que la ociosidad era la madre de todo mal, Ramón el Unicojonio (como le apodaban los alumnos) tenía encargado a su hijo de recoger las hojas secas del pinar y del patio de las fuentes en un saco. Ramón era un buen hombre, algo tosco y fatalmente condenado a escoger malas compañías. La peor de ellas era su esposa. Se había casado con una mujerona de escasas luces y delirios de princesa con trazas de fregona que gustaba de insinuarse ligera de ropas a la vista de su hijo y de los alumnos del colegio, lo cual era motivo de jolgorio y esperpento semanal.

*La sombra del viento, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, 2001*