



The Rachel Papers

Martin Amis

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In his uproarious first novel Martin Amis, author of the bestselling London Fields, gave us one of the most noxiously believable -- and curiously touching -- adolescents ever to sniffle and lust his way through the pages of contemporary fiction. On the brink of twenty, Charles High-way preps desultorily for Oxford, cheerfully loathes his father, and meticulously plots the seduction of a girl named Rachel -- a girl who sorely tests the mettle of his cynicism when he finds himself falling in love with her.

The Rachel Papers Details

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Author : Martin Amis

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From Reader Review The Rachel Papers for online ebook

Marcello S says

La domanda qui è: io cosa facevo a 24 anni?

(...)

Di sicuro non mettevo parole una dietro l'altra con lo stile navigato di Amis.

Che, ve lo devo dire, scrive da dio.

Questa è la storia di Charles, uno di quei ventenni che la sanno lunga. Un po' sbruffone e un po' problematico.

Che ti fa sorridere e allo stesso tempo lo odi. Che gli daresti una testata sui denti ma alla fine gli vuoi bene.

Ci sono le ragazze (Gloria e, soprattutto, Rachel), qualche amico la maggior parte del tempo strafatto, una famiglia non del tutto normale, l'università e Londra.

La storia forse non è originalissima.

E' pur sempre un romanzo di formazione sulla scia di Salinger e P. Roth, a grandi linee.

Però c'è tanto di quel mestiere che a dire che è un'opera prima di un poco più che ragazzino non ci crederesti.

E invece.

Ci si rivede in giro, Martin. [74/100]

Myfanwy says

Should this be renamed? I'm thinking Portrait of the Artist as a Young Horny Man? Charles Highway is an absolute little shit and yet he is endearing and I enjoyed my time with him (even when it was gross). Everything he does, he does for experience and for an opportunity to write about it. At least this is what he tells himself. I would guess, too, that everything he does, he does in hopes of feeling real emotion, thereby breaks the boundaries of his class and family.

Troy Parfitt says

The Rachel Papers was my first Martin Amis novel and I liked it enough that I would read Amis again, most definitely. People say his subsequent efforts, such as Money and London Fields, are brilliant, and based on this book – published (if my math is right) when the author was 24 – I imagine they are. What a talent to write that well at that age. In terms of style and ability, it reads like a novel penned by someone twice as old.

The story (a narrative told on the day before the protagonist's 20th birthday, recounting the previous pre-university year) revolves around Charles Highway and his “first love” Rachel, though it's unclear if Charles really loves Rachel (or anything, or anyone, besides perhaps William Blake). Charles, you see, isn't a very nice person. He is an exceptionally bright and an exceptionally egomaniacal and shallow 19 year old. He lies, he manipulates; he's cold. But he knows he's not a nice fellow (indeed, he tells you precisely why), so

this articulate candour makes for humour, and the book is really funny in places. And it's that can't-see-it-coming humour, the best kind. I particularly liked the line (after some confessional about some inadequacy or personal issue) 'My heart really went out to me there.' It's an interesting premise for a first-person narrative; Charles is effectively saying, "I'm a worm, and here's why I'm a worm."

The only problem I had with the book is that it is a sort of literary teen romance – very literary in places, but very teen romance in others. It made me think back to those zit-concerned, first girlfriend days: sneaking around behind parents' backs, thinking "oldsters" were quite lame, and all that jazz – but at times it came across as too teen-edition-Harlequin-romance. I didn't really need a description of fumbling for buttons or a step by step through opening a condom package (well maybe one, but not two or three). You get to an age where reading about that kind of thing loses appeal. But what else could a 24 year old have written about?

The character Kevin, Charles's bother-in-law, is priceless – endless comedy, certainly based on a real person. Kevin is a kitchen-sitting, booze guzzling, card playing lout who likes to indulge Charles in banal conversation or locker-room talk about his sister (and Charles doesn't seem to mind because he admits he thinks his sister is hot!). Kevin's not a very nice person either, so he and Charles (or so Kevin thinks) seem to have a connection.

I wonder what Martin Amis thinks of this book. It was written in 1973, and Amis has since gone on to become a literary giant. Most writers wish their first couple of efforts would disappear. I thought *The Rachel Papers* was a good read. I imagine twenty-somethings with good taste in literature (and a sense of humour) would find it a great one.

Troy Parfitt, author of *Why China Will Never Rule the World*

Faye says

Read: April 2017

I decided to read *The Rachel Papers* after reading the amazing *Time's Arrow* last year and I cannot believe these two books were written by the same author. I wrote a review of *Time's Arrow* at the time which showed how much I loved it and I guess I expected this book to be of a similar calibre but it was nowhere near as good.

The protagonist here is Charles, who is trying too hard to be a 'lovable rogue' sort of character, but really he comes across as pretentious and arrogant. For reasons not made clear to me he is obsessed with sleeping with a girl named Rachel and the plot follows his attempts to get to know her and seduce her.

By three-quarters of the way through this book I really didn't care what happened to Charles or Rachel. Neither were likeable or particularly interesting characters. I have since realised that this was Amis's first book which helps explain the difference in quality between this and *Time's Arrow* and so I will continue to look out for more Amis books in the future.

Rating: 1/5 stars

Jeremy says

It was about time, I decided, that I paid some attention to the work of Martin Amis. After all he's a significant figure in literature; named one the fifty greatest British writers since 1945, son of the late Kingsley Amis, friend of the late Christopher Hitchens and writer of lauded novels and non-fiction. Just as well I'd bought *The Rachel Papers* a few years ago when I was spending money on novels in an irresponsible fashion. In any case, it's always good to be prepared, and fortunately Amis did not let me down.

The Rachel Papers happens to be Martin Amis's first novel and features the first person musings of nineteen year old protagonist Charles Highway. Charles is a perfect summation of what it is like to be nineteen: gross, arrogant and horny, very horny. Charles is on the verge of possibly entering Oxford to study literature. He's also the writer of copious narcissistic tracts about his life, which includes the *Rachel papers*. This never ending document details just how Charles will win Rachel over and therefore have his way with an older woman (although Rachel is barely older than Charles) before he turns twenty and leaves behind his teenage years forever. Charles is an easy character to warm to due to his witty and engaging observations of, amongst other subjects, the British class system. Also *The Rachel Papers* has a narrative style that's akin to Aldous Huxley letting his hair down over the course of a drunken long weekend, which is very entertaining indeed.

The Rachel Papers reveals a late teenage mind that is obsessed with not only girls, but also gross bodily functions. There is a great deal of detail about various bodily fluids, including descriptions of what he hacks out of his bronchial lungs and his battles with massive pimples. Although there is plenty of juvenile humour to be had throughout the novel, *The Rachel Papers* is much more than it initially seems. The novel presents three significant relationship stages: the youthful and lustful first flush of love in the form of Charles and Rachel, the problematic middle stages in the form of Highway's sister - Jennifer and her husband - the proudly lower class Norman, and finally there is the passionless endgame of Highway's parents. The nature of these relationships provides a clever subtext beneath the grotesque that results in a life lesson for Charles Highway which, in the end, cuts through his adolescent anger at his father and his own indulgent narcissistic tendencies.

There are also some literary themes at play, with Highway constantly referencing literary greats such as William Blake and innumerable British poets. It is no coincidence that Highway is attempting to gain entry into Oxford, as it provides Amis with an opportunity to satirize the British education system. Highway is also endlessly taking notes and working on his epically bitter 'Letter to my Father' which ironically, it seems to me, is a letter to his future self. It's tempting to see Amis and his father within this strained relationship. Amis has admitted that Charles is partly based on his youthful self. There's certainly a cutting self awareness to the narrative, as well as being absolutely hilarious and unashamedly male. Amis also manages to pull off the best sex scene I've ever read, which is unflinching in its realism without being cringe-worthy. The novel ends with some of the coldest closing lines I've ever read, the kind that only a very brave writer could produce.

Upon finishing *The Rachel Papers* I began to miss it like an old friend who I knew I wouldn't see for a long time. As a result I'm now a total fan of Martin Amis and I intend to read the rest of his bibliography in order of publication. Amis has been a controversial writer over the years, one who's raised the ire of many conservative commentators in Great Britain. Over the years his friend Christopher Hitchens staunchly defended Amis, something I'm willing to take on now that Hitchens is dead. I say this with tongue firmly in

cheek of course, however it is apparent that *The Rachel Papers* is an easy target for accusations of misogyny. In its defense I have to say that the novel is not necessarily misogynistic in nature; it is much more accurate to view it in anthropological terms. Amis shows that there is a certain confidence in a young man's stride, but unfortunately there is also an unresolvable duality at the heart of the male psyche that perhaps few woman (and men) will ever come to terms with.

From my blog: <http://excelsiorforever.blogspot.com.au/>

christa says

Charles Highway is a Rick Ocasek-looking, luggie horking, father-hating-for-unspecified-reasons, asthmatic on the cusp of his 20th birthday, which he is taking, like most things, very seriously. He spends the hour leading up to midnight of the big day, which he refers to as the end of his youth, revisiting his relationship with Rachel. This is easy, as Charles Highway has kept detailed notes on their time together, all while simultaneously creating a personal guidebook called "Conquests and Techniques: A Synthesis."

Martin Amis does this so well, creating a character so unlikable that if you met Charles Highway in real life you'd induce a brain spasm from over-using your eye rolling muscles. Amis takes that loathsome protagonist in his first novel, "*The Rachel Papers*," and turns it all into a very witty story.

Charles is staying with his sister and her abusive husband while he prepares to apply for admission to Oxford. He's got a girl Gloria who stops by for all sorts of floor routine antics, which are given play-by-play treatment. "What did I feel for her?" He wonders one morning. "Ambiguous lust, genial condescension, and gratitude. It didn't seem enough."

He meets Rachel by offending her at a party, taking her on a date, not calling her, then giving it another go a week or so later. She's a tough sell, with an American boyfriend always orbiting her. Charles plots ways to make headway: He visits a museum they play to go to, plots profound statements he can say while standing near a window that delivers a specific light. He does the same with movies. He manufactures all sorts of tortured emotions, and soon enough he's got her in his bed.

Things with Rachel don't last long.

Not much happens in this short novel covering an equally short amount of time. It's a lot of listening to the pretentious ramblings of a teenager who is trying to mold his life to look and sound certain ways. Certain books left open to certain pages, and the album on the front of the pile is deliberate. But every minute in Charles Highway's head is funny and ridiculous, although treated so seriously. Like a caricature who believes he is an illustration.

Clare says

This is a bit of a curate's egg of a reading experience. I began finding Charles Highway's escapades mildly amusing, took a detour into down and out hatred of vacuous Rachel and odious Charles and ended up in a state of turbulent hilarity. This is basically a book about being a teenage boy - obsessed with phlegm, spunk and pulling girls. At times Highway is intensely dislikeable - like wading through a teenage boy's room in fact - but he is undeniably fascinating. However, the prize for most dislikeable character must surely go to Norm, who Charles pales into insipidity beside. Even in the comic interludes, in which he holds centre stage, he is difficult enough to give reading room to.

As to the writing, this was one of Amis' early novels - apparently published when he was 24. Some of the structure is a little rough - particularly the eccentric use of the "you" character later in the book (perhaps I read it too haphazardly to recognise its true significance). The "papers" to which the title refers are an interesting literary conceit but seem to get sidelined and are never fully fleshed out or used particularly cleverly. (*The Night Train* uses a similar idea with a lot more success).

However, the character of Charles is entirely believable. Perhaps Amis's relatively youthful age meant that he held nothing back in sticking a nail into the embarrassments of adolescence (after all he had had none of the intervening years to develop the nostalgia for make-believe youth.) Recommended to anyone who thinks they may experience a mid-life crisis and thinks they need talking down.

Eleni says

I haven't read other Martin Amis novels. I have read analyses about Martin Amis, I have read interviews of Martin Amis and I have read raving reviews of OTHER novels of Martin Amis and I believe everybody who praises his talent. Unfortunately I should have also believed the people who praise his talent and who warned me not to choose *The Rachel Papers* as an introduction to his work, on the grounds that – surprisingly enough - it sucks.

I didn't and it was a big mistake. I chose *The Rachel Papers* in the hope that it would turn out to be my *High Fidelity* of the 70s (without the music), or at least a light version of it, because to actually match *High Fidelity* is too ambitious even for comparable books that chronologically precede it. I also hoped it would turn out to be an easy and fun read about teenage lust, which would be GREAT. Give me the *Footloose* and *Pretty In Pink* videotapes ok it's dvds, anytime and I'll watch them, never mind the dozens of times I already have done so. For each of these movies.

/end of synopsis of (laughable in retrospect) expectations.

Well. This was no fun read for sure. It wasn't even an easy read and it's a short one, and suffice to say, I won't dignify that book with the slightest comment on potential proximities to a 70s version of anything even remotely related to the Hornby universe.

So what is *The Rachel Papers*?

The Rachel Papers is an incredibly **B-O-R-I-N-G** and badly written coming of age novel about some Charles 20-year old who, similarly to the entire book, is completely humourless. Charles doesn't give a fuck

about anything in life except getting laid, preferably with the number one popular Rachel girl, with whom he is obsessed. Which is fine. And completely understandable if you're not even 20, like Charles.

Unfortunately, at least for a human (can't vouch for extraterrestrials), Charles also features a remarkably rare combination of all of the following: inferiority complexes, delusional ideas of grandeur, sinister feelings for his father, lack of trustworthiness, self-esteem instability, lack of empathy towards everybody, hallucinational – apparently – ideas that planetary systems where being a complete arsehole is cool are already known to man and a desperate need for attention. He is exactly the kind of person who will try to sell their half-knowledge of the Dostoyevsky wikipedia entry (and maybe of one of those short stories by Pushkin) as expertise on Russian literature. You know how it goes.

Of course, lovely books where the main character is a complete jerk are not only perfectly possible, but also in existence, in abundance. In fact, *1984* and *Crime And Punishment* have to be my two most favourite books ever (so far anyway), and the protagonists in both books suck. They suck. One of them is also a murderer! So that's clearly not an issue for me.

The issue is that Charles both sucks and has nothing to share with the reader, good or bad. Top this up with a bunch of extra two-dimensional underdeveloped characters – yes; that means Rachel too – and an obnoxiously crude writing style and that's it.

Does **this** sound tempting to you?

I didn't think so.

Tim says

This is Amis' first novel, written when he was in his early twenties. I greatly enjoyed his middle period but gave up on him after reading a couple of his more recent novels – Yellow Dog and House of Meetings. Then I came across this in the garden shed and realised I'd never read it...

Martin Amis has a talent for creating obnoxious characters and the narrator of The Rachel Papers, Charles Highway, certainly fits this bill. Except, unlike in his middle period when he somehow managed, almost like a conjuring trick, to cajole you into sympathising with his villains, the obnoxious character in The Rachel Papers remains obnoxious.

Charles Highway is about to turn twenty. He's also about to go up to Oxford. Rachel is his first attempt at an adult relationship. His pursuit of her is conducted with a scholarly attention to detail. In fact it soon becomes clear she is little more than a projection of his colossal vanity. Charles describes himself thus: "Thinking back, actually, 'self-infatuation' strikes me as a rather ill-chosen word. It isn't so much that I like or love myself. Rather, I'm sentimental about myself."

Amis has lots of fun sending up the writer because this is also a novel about the writing process. He shows us, cleverly from three steps removed – the writer watching the writer turn life into writing – how the author transposes experience into material, shows us the cynic and the self-serving scavenger in the writer.

The humour is often rather puerile and rather smug, lots of "hawking" and other jokes about body effluents but there's no denying a well-controlled mastery of his theme and a fair bit of entertainment along the journey.

lorinbocol says

sono più che mai convinta che un charles highway nella vita andrebbe frequentato almeno un po'. e proprio in virtù delle di lui smisurate cadute di stile, degli inciampi, delle fobie, delle gambe storte, della condotta variamente laida e - peggio che mai - della voce stridula e nasale. perché fatti salvi taluni repentini moti di disappunto, ci si divertirebbe un tot.

(forse con *ragazze perbene* si intendono semplicemente quelle a cui son toccati in sorte ragazzi appena troppo noiosi).

Hugo Emanuel says

Martin Amis é um escritor sobre quem tenho opiniões contraditórias. Acho a sua prosa enérgica e hilariante; seduzem-me os temas que ele aborda e tramas dos seus romances. No entanto, nunca li um único dos seus romances que não achasse estar carregado de defeitos, não obstante as suas óbvias virtudes – muitas das quais são constantemente salientadas em entrevistas e declarações emitidas pelo próprio. Sim, os seus livros são perversamente hilariantes mas a dissecação do "absurdo da condição pós-moderna" que Amis e outros afirmam ser característica dos seus romances parece-me quase sempre ora pobremente ou exageradamente abordada – raramente na medida certa – e de uma forma um tanto e quanto imatura. Mas o que sei eu? Sou apenas um leitor anónimo, os especialistas em Literatura lá o irão de saber melhor do que eu, suponho. Não obstante o facto de achar que o que há de mais literato em Amis anda demasiado de mãos dadas com o que este tem de mais imaturo, não consigo evitar lê-lo compulsivamente. O facto é que esta dicotomia de algum modo me seduz.

Este "Os Papeis De Rachel" é particularmente problemático pois tem mais defeitos do que os outros romances que li de Amis, o que é compreensível pois foi publicado quando este tinha ainda 24 anos. A personagem principal de "Os Papeis de Rachel" é Charles Highway, um jovem de 19 anos inteligente e grande apreciador de literatura mas acima de tudo egocêntrico, presunçoso e obcecado por sexo. Os seus objectivos imediatos consistem em passar nos exames de admissão de Oxford (acredita ser inteligente o suficiente para passá-los sem o mínimo esforço e surpreender todo o corpo docente da Universidade de Oxford com seu brilhantismo) e ter o maior número de sexo possível. Frequentemente distraída e despreocupadamente uma escola de preparação para exames universitários de modo a que os seus pais lhe forneçam dinheiro e liberdade necessárias para que se possa dedicar ao que realmente ocupa os seus dias: esboçar em forma escrita as suas impressões e opiniões sobre a vida em geral (que considera ser mordazes e espirituosas) e formular estratégias pouco honestas (por vezes também por escrito) para conquistar raparigas. No entanto, acontece o inesperado quando conhece Rachel, por quem, muito contrariadamente, se vem a apaixonar “á seria”.

Na parte inicial do romance Amis parece demasiado satisfeito com as suas “chalaças” e referências literárias para se preocupar em delinear as personagens secundárias e procurar dar à sua obra uma estrutura narrativa minimamente disciplinada. No entanto, o romance melhora significativamente depois do encontro de Charles com Rachel. A partir desta altura a obra é de facto hilariante, espirituosa e até por vezes (surpresa das surpresas) terna.

Gostei de ler o romance – achei-o divertido e viciante, apesar dos seus defeitos. E sei que hei de voltar a lê-lo, especialmente por este ser curto. Por estes motivos sinto-me um pouco culpado por lhe atribuir apenas três estrelas mas também não posso, em boa consciência dar-lhe quatro. Digamos que é um 3.5 em 5 e um 6.8 em 10.

No entanto, se não conhecem o trabalho do autor recomendo que leiam “A Informação” e “Money” primeiro pois embora estes romances sejam bem menos acessíveis do que “Os Papéis de Rachel” são obras muito mais bem conseguidas e emblemáticas do autor.

Callie says

So I had a really difficult time finishing this book. Several times I wanted to quit reading it, but I honestly hate stopping a book when I'm half way through. I think my big mistake with this one was seeing the terribly made 80's film adaptation prior to reading the book. Man, was that one terrible film.

Second mistake, was that I couldn't stand the main character, Charles Highway, rather I LOATHED him. What a horribly self-centered, obnoxious, womanizing, vile protagonist.

And, yeah, I get that that's sort of the point. I suppose. But I think it's pretty hard to get into anything you're reading if you despise the narrator- am I correct? His descriptions of his sexual encounters with Rachel were horrendous (I.E. "It was too dark there (thank God) for me to be able to see what was right in front of my nose, just some kind of glistening pouch, redolent of oysters"). Yuck.

Definitely not my cup of tea, thank you.

Rob Walter says

I've given up trying to defend Martin Amis books. I tend to agree with every criticism that people offer, but to me they've missed the point. He's so wonderful to read because he has more technical mastery than any writer of the last fifty years that I've read. He can make his prose, and consequently his characters, do absolutely anything he likes.

As this is his first novel the pyrotechnics are somewhat muted, making it probably one of his more accessible novels. He has focused a bit more on characterisation, creating Charles Highway, who can stand as the equal of any of the unpleasant young men of literature in my opinion. He's at once detestable and forgivable, and he's instantly recognisable to anyone who's ever anticipated the sexual act with equal measures of dread and excitement, or felt an odd pleasure at coughing up a livid green lump of mucus.

If you've never read Martin Amis, or wondered what goes on in the head of self-involved young men, this is a good place to start.

Cailin Deery says

The Rachel Papers is hilarious, while shamelessly trashy and egomaniacal. After I got over my misgivings, it was hugely entertaining. I'd never read anything by Amis and impulsively picked this up to read in Oxford & London (the setting switches back and forth between the two cities) with little other rationalization. The Rachel Papers is Amis' first book, penned at 24, and I like what another reviewer said - it's like Catcher in the Rye if Holden Caulfield got laid. Kind of. Only Charles Highway is far more villainous.

Charles Highway is deeply manipulative, preparing for dates, phone conversations, and run-ins with analyses he wants Rachel to take as off-the-cuff but are actually composed (sketched out short, polemical pieces as he

says) and memorized.

"The faces of God and Adam [pause:] - pained, yet distant. [Ask what she thinks and agree:] Yes, it's almost as if Blake imagined the Creation as an inherently... tragic act [laugh here, getting out of your depth]."

Rachel: "Hello then. Wotcher reading?"

Charles: "Oh, you know, some tired old hack reproducing boiled-up earlier articles and pretending they form a unity. Posturing, wordy, inept, if you like - but not bad for a viva."

(Cut to Charles' inner monologue): Again quite impetuously, we began a tour of the shop. This allowed me a wide variety of tableaux: the boyish fascination I still took in children's toys, my mischievous quizzing of a saleswoman in Stationery; how refreshing it was that I liked vulgar greeting cards (kittens with balls of wool, dogs resembling old men.).

Somehow towards the end, he's visibly matured, slightly more apologetic. I'm not sure who this book was really intended for - it's a smutty book of teenage angst & loathing, but on the other hand it's very much a projection of Amis' post-collegiate pretension and beyond most teenagers I knew. A very weird choice for me, but I sadly loved it on the whole.

Ailsa says

Hell yeah.

.

"I took Rachel to a French film, *La Rupture*, as an oblique way of indicating to her how good in bed I was going to turn out to be." 109

"University challenge: the contestants seemed to be alarmingly well informed but, on the other hand, reassuringly hideous." 134

Anthony Vacca says

Vacca's Complaint:

I am inconsolably jealous when I consider that Martin Amis published his first book at 24 and had actually done the writing at least a year before, also I am disgusted with how much talent and confidence the bastard already had at my age. Here I am approaching my first quarter of a century and I have no first novel. I have no fame. I'm not deflecting pertinent questions from feminist reviewers by flirting with them. I have

accomplished nothing with my life. Nothing!

The Rachel Papers, Martin Amis' debut novel, is a snide and rude bildungsroman about an insufferably pretentious and over-articulate git named Charlie Highway, who, in the final hours before making that magical transformation into a twenty year-old, proceeds to ruminant over the past three months and his brief romance—his first experiences with love—with a posh bird named Rachel. The exact and expansive details of the relationship have been obsessively complied in a series of documents (Charlie collects material and produces portfolios for all the women in his life) called, you guessed it, the Rachel Papers. Over the course of this playfully metafictional novel, the reader gets to learn firsthand all of Charlie's overbearing opinions on sex, literature, classism, youth, aging, zits, self-loathing, farts, art, music and poetry, and all of this is further compounded by his snarky resentment for the entirety of the adult world, by which I mean his carelessly cruel and cavalier father. This book is by no means a great book but there is no denying the deep well of talent Amis is working with as he convincingly gives voice to his wannabe academic of a teenage boy. Yes, Rachel's portrayal is as thin as the paper on which she is deconstructed in excess by Charlie, who is very much a crude and shallow narrator. *The Rachel Papers* is a genuinely funny and cynical look at youth and childish notions of love, and how (most) young people don't really have shit to say about anything meaningful. Apologies Holden and whateveryournamesare in John Green's novels.

Jonfaith says

If Philip Roth is correct and life is misunderstanding people, then I remain awed by the riddle which is Martin Amis. His first novel *The Rachel Papers* injects self-awareness into satire, leaking a fecund foam which changes everything about how we regard the way we live now. The insecurity of adolescence is illustrated by our protagonist, one Charles Highway, who diagrams said angst and provides cross-references from the literary canon. One can imagine the reader or protagonist saying bugger Holden Caulfield, then recognizing that Highway has likely compiled a list of ten reasons as to his superiority over Mr. Caulfield.

During a lazy gap year Charles writes, drinks and woos the titular Rachel. Life doesn't meet his *precis*. Plans have to change. Matters become a little Meta and we are left a little uncertain about what is actual and what is fictive. This is one of the most hilarious novels I've read. Numerous passages left me almost convulsing with laughter.

Vanessa says

3.5 Often crude and rude but highly entertaining if not easily offended. The main thing I took from this book is Martin Amis has a unique way with words. I also learnt that teenage boys are extremely gross. He does well to capture the selfishness and insecurities of adolescence, if it wasn't as funny as it was this book would have been so cringeworthy.

Tfitoby says

For a book about a teenager supposedly coming of age, written nigh on 40 years ago and read by me rapidly approaching my 30th birthday; this was possibly not the best combination to get the most from the

controversial debut novel from famed misogynist Martin Amis. The only thing worse could possibly have been if I were female I suppose.

A quite enjoyable read but not as depraved or as entertaining as I had been previously led to believe. Charles Highway is a quite wonderful character, the type that seems to have become synonymous with Amis over the last 40 years; rude, unsympathetic, self-obsessed, self-aware but not aware of how he is actually perceived, intelligent, occasionally witty, to the point where this is how I imagine Martin Amis to be himself.

There are a fair few laugh out loud moments and times when you can't believe what you've just read, in a novel that feels so accurate and so true to life that at no point do you even consider the fact that this is not set in the second decade of the 21st century, these are not your peers you are reading about. And this has been true of all of his novels that I have read to date. A remarkable writer of literature.

Mircalla64 says

the spocchia papers

Charles è un insopportabile egocentrico stroncetto inglese, manca poco ai suoi vent'anni e, data l'immaturità che contraddistingue l'età in questione, eccolo lanciarsi nel racconto dei suoi pensieri ossessivo/compulsivi e delle sue manie di controllo:

è un ragazzetto come tanti, ma si crede speciale il caro Charles, che serba con grandiosa spocchia ogni suo pensiero per tramandarlo ai posteri, o semplicemente per darsi all'onanismo circa la sua capacità di manipolare parole copiate da altri e pensieri rimasticati senza ricordarsi di citarne le fonti...non è difficile ravvisare l'onestà dell'autore nel suo personaggio così ben riuscito, uno dei migliori di Amis, capace di una schiettezza molto ben sbandierata e altrettanto vacua, fine a se stessa e spesso non priva di una certa compiaciuta crudeltà circa il proprio potere sui sentimenti delle persone con cui sfortunatamente entra in relazione, Charles potrebbe esser stato lo stesso Amis, genitori in conflitto, padre ingombrante e problemi ai denti sono tutte cose di cui lui ci ha messo a parte negli anni...
