

54. Looking Holocaust backwards : Martin Amis's Time's Arrow

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APA: İKİZ, S. S. (2021). Looking Holocaust backwards : Martin Amis's Time's Arrow. *RumeliDE Dil ve Edebiyat Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, (22), 857-864. DOI: 10.29000/rumelide.897212.

Abstract

Martin Amis is one of the greatest contemporary British writers. His 1991 novel *Time's Arrow* is an exciting work that gives detailed experiences about the horror event of the Holocaust. The dialogue in the novel occurs in reverse; thus, the reader should be keen when reading to understand simple conversations well. Martin Amis believes that the Holocaust is the central event of the 20th century. *Time's Arrow* is of great interest to scholars of the Holocaust. In his early work, Martin Amis shows that he was interested in domestic issues and strict topics in the story about the Holocaust. Still, in *Time's Arrow*, he handles serious problems, which portrayed him as an informative and enthusiastic person to address an event like the Holocaust, one of the popular literature platforms. Amis's backward moves through time were presented clearly and comprehensively with a detailed account of the hero's life in reverse, like playing a video in reverse mode. As Amis presented in the novel, the Nazi rationality blurred the lines between destruction and creation, as damages were frequently rationalized as a means to develop. The story brings a profound understanding that genocide killing will lead to racial renewal. It illustrates that conflict can be used as an approach towards national renewal as in the German case when it used militarism. This paper will explore the Holocaust presented by Martin Amis in the novel and the narrative techniques used in the *Time's Arrow*.

Keywords: Martin Amis, Holocaust literature, reverse narration

Holokost'a geriden bakmak : Martin Amis's Time's Arrow

Öz

Martin Amis, en büyük çağdaş İngiliz yazarları arasındadır. 1991 romanı *Time's Arrow*, korkunç bir olay olan Holokost hakkında ayrıntılı deneyimler sunan heyecan verici bir çalışmadır. Romandaki diyalog ters yönde gerçekleşir; bu nedenle okuyucu basit konuşmaları bile anlayabilmek için için okurken istekli olmalıdır. Martin Amis, Holokost'un 20. yüzyılın en önemli olayı olduğuna inanır. *Time's Arrow*, Holokost ile ilgili çalışan akademisyenlerin büyük ilgisini çekmektedir. Martin Amis'in, erken dönem çalışmalarında, soykırımla ilgili hikayedeki gibi aile içi sorunlar ve ciddi konularla ilgilendiğini görürüz. *Time's Arrow*'da da yine ciddi sorunları ele almakta, bu da onu popüler edebiyat konularından biri olan Holokost gibi bir olayı ele almak için bilgi sahibi ve hevesli bir kişi olduğunu göstermektedir. Amis'in zamanda geriye doğru hareketleri, sanki bir videoyu tersten oynatır gibi, kahramanın hayatını tersine ayrıntılı bir anlatımla açık ve kapsamlı bir şekilde sunmaktadır. Amis'in romanda ortaya koyduğu gibi, Nazi mantığı, sıklıkla hasarları bir gelişme aracı olarak rasyonelleştirildiği için, yıkım ve yaratılış arasındaki çizgileri bulanıklaştırmıştır. Hikaye, soykırım cinayetinin ırksal bir yenilenmeye yol açacağına dair derin bir anlayış geliştirmeye

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çalışmaktadır. Çatışmanın, militarizmin kullanıldığı Almanya örneğinde olduğu gibi ulusal yenilenmeye yönelik bir yaklaşım olarak kullanılabileceğini göstermektedir. Bu makale, romanda Martin Amis'in sunduğu Holokost'u ve *Time's Arrow*'da kullanılan anlatım tekniklerini inceleyecektir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Martin Amis, Holokost edebiyatı, tersten anlatım

1. Introduction

The Time's Arrow novel narrates Odilo Unverdorben, an Australian Nazi doctor who commences his medicine career at Schloss Hartheim; the old, disabled, and sick people are admitted to euthanasia (van Wyk, 2015, p. 82). Odilo later joined the military with a Waffen SS unit in the Middle East and finally reached Auschwitz, where he helped “uncle Pep” in his medical practice. More so, it is argued that he was accountable for distributing the pellets of Zyklon B to the gas chambers. When Auschwitz was about to be slaughtered by the Russians, he flees and looks for refuge in Italy and later goes to Portugal, where Odilo changes his identity to Hamilton de Souza. After some time in Portugal, he moves to New York, and he was then known as John Young. Finally, he migrates to a North-East American town as Tod Friendly, and he continues with his profession as a doctor until he retired and died in America. Amis's narration of Odilo's lifestyles utilized two diverse narrative styles, such as doubling the protagonist and chronology and the narrator (Vice, 2003, p. 30).

The narration of Martin Amis's novel *Time's Arrow* in 1991 commences at the end of its story. It is recounted backward in an outright reverse chronology known as the “sustained, anonymized time-based reversal,” where eating implies vomiting and cleaning means dirtying. The entire story in the novel occurs in reverse; thus, the reader should be keen when reading to understand simple conversations well. The story itself is hard to understand without keen observation. *Time's Arrow* novel provokes a question that has brought up Amis from an early stage of his writing. Amis's memories of the past have their origin from the 20th century. He is much concerned with the manufacturing of nuclear weapons, which are of mass destruction. Amis considers the rise in power of the West's rooted crash in the Holocaust and the Soviet gulags. According to Amis, the Holocaust is the central event of the 20th century. In modern society, the Holocaust story is considered to be a horrible moment in history. The Holocaust is regarded as an event with no repair as the consequences cannot be forgotten or reversed. (2003, p. 33). Literature in several ways tries to display the occasion of the Holocaust through many ways as drama, among other ways. Also, Theodor Adorno argues that the Holocaust was the product of the “Dialectic of Enlightenment,” he implied that certain cultures in western society and tradition were manipulated for destructive motives (Badrideen, 2018, p. 57). *Time's Arrow* is of great essence and interest to scholars of the Holocaust. This paper will discuss the event of the Holocaust as stated by Martin Amis in the novel and techniques used in the *Time's Arrow*.

2. Backwards Narration

The novel commences its narration with the death of hero's and works back through his lifetime. His narration gives eccentric results than might be anticipated by the reader acquainted with flashbacks whose scenes succeed in reverse chronology. Thus, Amis's backward moves through time we're presented with much more significant modes with a detailed account of the hero's life in reverse, like playing a video in a reverse way. After the narration of the death of war heroes, the novel was set in a typical supernatural world in which impossible scenarios prevail.

Thus, by progressing backward, the style used in the narrative and Amis's remarks about the Nazi's ironic form of development is then composed of the belief in national renewal. In *Time's Arrow*, the narrative's reversals presented by Amis make sense when the character Tod scoped his past when he was a Nazi (López Alcázar, 2020, p. 23). As Amis presented in the novel, the Nazi rationality blurred the lines between destruction and creation, as damages were frequently rationalized as a means to develop. The novel illustrates the logical understanding that genocidal mass killing leads to racial renewal and reveals the hidden idea that conflicts can be used to approach national revival. He adds an example of the German state's militarism to renew the form and begin afresh. (Harris, 1999, p. 493.)

In his early work, Martin Amis reveals that he was interested in domestic issues and satirical subjects. Still, in *Time's Arrow*, he handles serious problems, which portrayed him as courageous to address controversial approaches like Holocaust. In an interview, Amis confesses that he was committed to and interested in the Holocaust as the key theme in *Time's Arrow* (López Alcázar, 2020, p. 34). The story reveals that Amis respects those who believe that the Holocaust should not be documented. Besides, he also totally disagrees with people who reject witty or sophisticated techniques for writing something crucial and sensitive. In Amis's opinion, he states that an individual cannot become a diverse type of author due to his writing. The author says that there is no subject literature cannot handle and narrates how he felt as if he was in his ending moments in the time of writing *Time's Arrow* novel since it was the most challenging and sensitive subject to address at such a time (Amis, 2003, p. 36) Martin Amis was inspired to write *Time's Arrow* by the idea of sharing the story of people's life backward in time. Also, Robert Jay Lifton's text, *The Nazi Doctors*, which emphasizes the perpetrators' and mainly the doctors' functions in the Holocaust, enabled Amis to bring out his book's final solution.

In Odilo's story, *Time's Arrow* commences in a Massachusetts hospital at the deathbed of a 75-year-old doctor called Tod T. Friendly (Praisler, 2017, p. 179). The entire novel is an extended flashback to his life. Amis's novel was unique since the whole story was narrated in reverse, impacts preceding cause, in which the phrase later events come before sooner. On an inspection tour of the Nazi death camp known as Treblinka, the narrator of the story identified that a clock's hands in a railway station are colored to a permanent (Amis, 2003, p.151). In the narration of Doctor Odilo, he helped "uncle Pep" in his murder and torture of Jews; thus, the reverse chronology implies that he establishes a life and cures the sick rather than the opposite.

The story's reversal technique interferes with the actions involved and converts them to perception, which almost feels like a gimmick. For instance, the eating procedure is explained backward in meticulous detail. When Tod eats preceding dessert soup for dinner, food is raised from the mouth and onto the bowl. A toilet converts to be the seat of a peculiar ceremony where fecal issues arise from the plate and go into the bowels. Notably, the cleaners decide to deliver garbage, and older adults snatch toys from children. Pilar Hidalgo describes a group of British novelists born after World War II that the Holocaust has come to symbolize something not alien in its enormity, enacted in faraway areas, but something connected to what it is to be human (James, 2020, p. 248). The outrageous face of Nazism was all the most monstrous since of its terrible normality. This makes part of Amis' section emphasize a perpetrator instead of the victim. Odilo, a Nazi doctor, as the narrator highlight unexceptional, liable to what everyone else dies, bad or good, with no restriction once over the cover of numbers. As narrated in the reverse chronology, *Time's Arrow* concludes in Odilo's birthplace, Solingen. The narrator also refers to it as "modern tow," which harbors a treasured secret. Solingen is also known to be the birth town of Adolf Eichmann. Currently, it is utilized to interpreted things

contrary to the unreliable narrator's words; the audience should look at the pride known as a proud secret as nothing but shame, thus the pity of a town persistently associated with the Gestapo supervisor directly accountable for the final solution (Amis, 2003, p. 33). Thus, if the Holocaust does not belong only to culprits and their descendants; therefore, it can be argued that the Holocaust trauma and trauma are comprehensive.

3. Holocaust Trauma: Destruction or Creation?

The Time's Arrow novel focuses on a culprit who has achieved to become someone else in the Nations but is still traumatized by his past story. Holocaust culprits are also ordinary individuals who do not have a demonic measurement that could have made them resistant to trauma. Valentina Adami asserts that *Time's Arrow* embodies a traumatic activity that is not in and of itself substantial to define it as trauma fiction (Ben-Merre, 2013, p. 118). Thus, the novel's formal narrative structure and its capacity to convey the fragmentation of defining and identity are traumatic experiences. The recurring stylistic characteristic of trauma fiction in the novel entails repetition, intersexuality, and fragmented narrative sound. In *Time's Arrow* novel, the character and the narrator, whose lifestyle is narrated in the novel, are the same; for example, the narrator introduces himself as Tod Friendly, the name adopted later by Odilo after WWII. The narrator will also not be explained as auto diegetic because the link between the narrative situation and essential character is but a degree of the rift between them. Hence, the narrator can be neither homo-diegetic nor hetero-diegetic is a parasite traveling with human characters towards his secret. The secret can be evil or non-intelligible but will eventually expose the crime's nature (Harris, 1999, p. 497). The narrator does not have access to his host's thinking, but he is not restricted from expressing his emotions or from his nightmares. However, he is fortified with a fail quantity of value-free data or comprehensive "superb vocabulary" and "knowledge."

The narrator in the novel is unaware that his backward trajectory story through time disrupts the original chronology. The narrator is utterly amazed and ignorant of history. He has an apparent aversion to human suffering, experienced by the wounded and ill as medicated by doctors, women accused by the protagonist, Jews, and the marginalized social groups. Because time moves backward, recalling is replaced by instant forgetting in the novel. This amazed the human's ability to forget; this makes most individuals more innocent, persistently ignoring. The book expresses a story of Odilo's attempts at losing his memory and altering his identity, while the numeral of the doubled protagonist character depicts the precariousness of distinctiveness under extreme traumatic conditions. In Odilo's life, the character attempts to escape from his identity and create a new life by changing places and names. Odilo is presented in the novel as the character that has a behavior of burning and crumbling all evidence of his past stories like photos and love letters (Harris, 1999, p. 501). Notably, when the narrative story extends to the protagonist's time in Auschwitz, Odilo's two halves are missed for the first time in his narrative tale presented by Amis. The Nazi project makes sense when inversed, but if the reverse narrative and the novels are unreliable, the narrator provides a new meaning to the detailed acts by turning damages into the creation and brings further implications to the rhetoric of Nazi treatise. The Nazis desired to dream of a race, the Aryan race, which they can cure by extirpating at all they consider impure.

Nazi rhetoric is utilized to imply the opposite of what it meant in a real-life situation in the novel. The horror of the Holocaust vanishes if the activities are read backward. Still, suppose the readers understand that history will not be undone, and so its reader has to deliver the tragedy missing in the narrative text. In that case, it can be argued that the content and form of text in *Time's Arrow* are

inseparable. The counter-spontaneous nature of the Holocaust, to quote an expression often on the lips of the narrator, has infused all aspects of the texts; it connects to the narrator, its reader, and the narrator's selection of words interpretation of activities. Lawrence Langer debates the idea of backward comprehension. He argues that the Holocaust is a hesitant block to, mainly, an American-style positivity or any belief in enhancement or a future that will be appropriate that the current one. Kierkegaard, in his writing, asserts that life is lived forward and understood in a backward manner; thus, he suspects that for the majority of people, this progressively an attractive premise (van Wyk, 2015, p. 85). But, the opposite of his arguments is valid for the Holocaust know-how, people live it backward times, and once they arrive there're, people identify themselves reflected in its atrocities, a type of historical quick's and which limits people bid's to convey it in a more meaningful approach in future.

In the novel *Time's Arrow*, the argument about the Holocaust is enacted. According to Amis, the Holocaust is life lied backward as illustrated by the characters used in the novel; the Nazis invoke a crowd from the sky above the lake's as the narrator places it and understand forward, in the sense that impacts precede the actual cause (Vice, 2003, p. 33). Thus, as the narrator mischievously argues that one issue led to another issue in one of Tod's romances, it seems it was the other way around. The divide of effects and cause as accurate of the Holocaust in *Time's Arrow* novel is on a more local level; there, the previous day is always terrible, precisely when Tod hits the teacup. In a strengthening of Langer's dispute, the narrator of *Time's Arrow* recognizes that the world will begin making sense at a precise moment, "Now" that Odilo arrives at Auschwitz central by motorbike (López Alcázar, 2020, p. 43). Familiarized as we are by this period to the text's logic, we know that people are reading about Odilo's flight from Auschwitz. We can now look at the film of his life there run past us in the reverse period. Auschwitz mainly creates any sense to the narrator backward since observing it in reverse can provide a narrative and moral trajectory that seem satisfactory and familiar.

Several events in the *Time's Arrow* novel make narrative inversion, specifically suitable vehicle like terrible subjects. Thus, the dual reversal of chronology narrative and causality faultlessly illustrates the Nazis' deterioration of morality. Amis argues that it is less absurd to represent death as birth than Nazi doctors to base their skills and practice on an apparent absurdity practice and vision of killing to heal. *The Time's Arrow* novel fulfills Amis's unbearable fantasy that history could be reversed and the atrocities of the mid-20th century undone (James, 2020, p. 250). The awful journey back into World War II and the Nazi Holocaust reflects an inversion of Amis's journey considering his generation's enchantment toward the nuclear Holocaust. Description in reverse order, the Holocaust is illustrated simultaneously as the final product and the initial of contemporaneity. In post-modern times, the invention is normally born of dissension, and Martin Amis struggles to dissent from the Nazi agreement of racial superiority. Thus, Martin's modern esthetic is based on an endless critique of demonstration that must contribute to protecting the diversity of optimum debate. *Time's Arrow* novel negatively inverts rationality, temporality, and causality. The protagonist in the story is featured by his willingness to admit fascist ideology with what Lifton explains as it promises unity, fusion, and togetherness.

Also, a persistent theme of payments creates with collar-stud-sized gold fragments; the narrator observes, he realized his gold had a sacred efficacy. Sacred efficacy is profane theft, the gold has not been keenly amassed but concealed away and even submerged by Unverdorben, and it's not for, but it's obtained from the Jews' teeth (López Alcázar, 2020, p. 59). Louvish, a sharp criticizer of the *Time's Arrow* novel, argues that Martin Amis's backward narration tactic is not a successful de-

familiarization of the impracticality of bringing the Holocaust capability into any significant future, but an ill-advised and cynical trial to access the holocaust act (Vice,2003,p.11) More so, Louvish dismissed the claims that *Time's Arrow* novel is creditable as satire, thorough inverting Auschwitz's morality. The audience is thereby brought to a new hedge to ponder on the awfulness of it all.

On the other hand, the Nazis consider their examination programmed as altruistic when it was the right approach. This impact of reversed verbal use of narration that Louvish mainly objects to in *Time's Arrow*. But in the pre-Nazi era, German medical learner Unverdorben and his colleagues frequently go out to assist Jews. This is a period when the narrator's selection of ironic words and the Nazis' observation of their extermination program as altruistic when it was the appropriate way round to come and uncomfortably close together (Slater, 1993, p. 145). To make reversal narration more effective, Amis divides the narrating from the narrated topic. It seems that his strange narrator derives from Lifton's psychological idea of doubling the split of the self into two operating wholes acts as a whole self. The protagonist's mind in the novel directs his body's action, but he should exclude his emotions and feel from his part-self from accountability for activities there. Thus, this will lead to repudiation by the initial self of everything performed by the Auschwitz self (van Wyk, 2015, p. 88). Hence, the reader will be hindered from judging the narrated topic's actions with coherence. Thus, deprived of life's involvement, moved into a symbolic limbo from which to consider his alter-ego's life in reverse format, the narrator is incapable of discerning implication and must be thought of as the Nazi doctor's soul (Amis, 2003, p. 40).

At Auschwitz, *Time's Arrow's* narrator notes the essential Oven room known as Heaven block, and its primary approach road is Heaven Street (Vice, 2003, p. 88). This information is historically precise and accurate since it was retrieved from Lifton's research, *The Nazi Doctors*. Thus, Louvish can claim that this seamless drive between Nazi terminology and the *Time's Arrow* reversed world terminology is critical for Martin Amis's supporters. Therefore, it can be concluded that Amis has set instances of the Nazis' destruction of language in some context where they are sensitive and a backward narrative. In the novel, the slogan 'Arbeit Macht Frei' has absolutely true implications instead of its deceitfully altruistic one in a reserved nation (Amis, 2003, p. 42). The consequences of narrating Odilo's story backward are subtle, multiple, and highly ironic. Diedrick claims that the opening explanation of Unverdorben's, also known as Tod Friendly's action as a post-war doctor in American, expected his drastic immersion in intimate and Auschwitz terrible secret of his past story (2004, p. 131). In reverse chronology narrative, a patient enters the operation room seeking medication and emerges with a tarnished nail fixed in his head by the doctor. Amis adopted the paradoxical trait from Lifton's description of Nazi doctors who referred forth an omnipotent emotional state connected with sadism and impotence and a times masochism in his narrations.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, birth describes the backward story, which becomes a horrifying encounter. At one point, it renders the futility of human existence and formulates strict, critical address to Nazi practices in camps concentrated. Parents bring Tod to their babies in the night and pay antibiotics that mainly appear to the source of babies' cries and pain. Thus, babies are not healthier when they leave, patiently nurturing hell to the doorstep, and the mother will cracks up entirely. The young children usually are sad; hence each last month, they cry more than before. Martin Amis argued that babies' most sensitive subject is the focal point of the memory taped in *Time's Arrow* novel, a scheme for stirring risky

comparison and counteracting dangerous complacency. Children postulate Tod's dreams, witnessed by the narration in the novel.

Martin Amis utilizes irony as the narrative technique in *Time's Arrow* novel; however, the reviewers criticized him, but Amis argues that it was entirely appropriate when narrating the story in reverse form. Nazism was a biomedical vision to practice Jewry's cancer and reverse to something that makes Jewry a respectable irony. According to Lifton's study, the Nazis' abuse of language provides their doctors with a discourse in which murdering was no longer considered killing. Lifton exposes how this act of misnaming was determinedly created as Auschwitz, where the outpatient ward centers were a section for selections and hospital section, waiting rooms before death (Slater, 1993, p. 148). Thus, in *Time's Arrow* novel, Martin Amis effectively weakens the Nazi abuse of language to rationalize mass killing and uses irony to assert a malicious code of ethics. Also, Unverdorben's many name-changes additional confirm the technique Martin Amis use to reinforce morality through irony. When *Time's Arrow* story narrative is reversed, Tod Friendly change to John Young, despites Tod's association with death when he was in German, later also changes from John to gold-rich Hamilton. The latter undertakes his birth name of Odilo Unverdorben.

The arguments in the *Time's Arrow* novel concludes that Martin Amis's exemplification of the Holocaust depicts his possible reservation pertain to narrating catastrophe in reverse form. Amis creates a narrator who is vulnerable to misinterpreting the Holocaust since the backward run of time explains catastrophe passively through the narrator. Martin Amis misrepresents facts that the audience is aware of hence entertaining and depicting diverse interpretive possibilities. The counter-impulsive nature of the Holocaust, to quote a phrase habitually on the lips of the narrator, has permeated all aspects of the texts; it connects to the narrator, its reader, and the narrator's assortment words and interpretation of activities. The split of effects and source as accurate of the Holocaust in *Time's Arrow* novel is on a more local level; there, the preceding day is always terrible, explicitly when Tod hits the cup. Thus, instead of Martin Amis illustrating and narrating the Holocaust's catastrophe in absolutist and concrete terms, Amis utilizes his text to welcome the readers to reflect the multiple approaches in which the Holocaust can be narrated, misinterpreted and understood by using diverse narrative techniques.

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