

Five British Writers

Day 27
(of 28)



Source Evaluation

- What is the main argument of the article?
- How does the author support this claim? What kinds of evidence or narrative techniques are used?
- How does the article use other sources in its argument?
- Does the article consider opposing arguments and refute them persuasively?
- What do you find most interesting or useful about the article?
- Are any of the author's assumptions questionable?

Articles and Reviews

1. Finney, Brian. "What's Amis in Contemporary British Fiction? Martin Amis's *Money* and *Time's Arrow*" (1999)
2. Diedrick, James. "Tracing Time's Arrow," excerpt from *Understanding Martin Amis* (1995)
3. Kakutani, Michiko. "Time Runs Backward to Point Up a Moral." *New York Times*. 22 October 1991.
4. Wood, James. "Slouching toward Auschwitz to be born again." *Guardian*. 19 September 1991.
5. Wood, James. "The literary lip of Ladbroke Grove." *Guardian*. 7 September 1991.
6. Marta, Jan. Review of *Time's Arrow* (February 1996)
7. *Spectator* (on microfilm in Healey Library, call number [AP4.S7](#)). In the issue appearing on 28 September 1991, James Buchan argues that Amis wrongly uses the holocaust for profit in his article "The Return of Dr. Death" (page 38). Amis's reply, "Creepier than Thou," also appeared in *Spectator*, on 5 October 1991 (25).

Critical Perspectives

- 1. Review of Amis's personal and literary history: "Many of the features that characterize Amis's subsequent fiction are already discernible in this book - its scatological and satiric treatment of sex, its comic description of the indignities of bodily life (spots, smells, toilet habits, sexual infection and the like), and above all its inventive deployment of language"
- 2. Influences: Swift, Primo Levi, Vonnegut, historical works. Discusses the German meanings of Tod and Unverdorben
- 3. Critique of effect: "Unfortunately, the bulk of the novel seems like an extended setup for this emotional payoff -- pages and pages of sophomoric humor laid as groundwork for one huge philosophical point. As a result, the reader must wade through the first three-quarters of the book, which reads like a virtuosic but mannered performance by a writer eager to exploit the comic possibilities of a structural gimmick, before getting to the heart of the matter ... it's a risky narrative strategy more suited for the short story form than a novel. As it is, the top-heavy jokey part of the book overshadows its somber conclusion, blunting its larger moral ambitions"
- 4. Influences: Shakespeare, Nietzsche, Adorno, Vonnegut. Discusses the interrelation of narrative style and plot and defends philosophical point: "The Nazis first attempted to turn the Holocaust into a Utopian narrative, not Amis."
- 5. Discusses style: "Amis uses exaggeration and repetition, as Dickens does, like a rhyme, like a beat. His American influences have not affected this very English style ... he begins sentences with the same opening words, he repeats phrases, he squeezes a subject for its pungent comic essences" Features Martin Amis interview: "'Yes, Kafka is very funny. But so was Nazism. It was thoroughly ridiculous. I mean, leading Nazis really thought that they were descended from the ice-clouds, via Atlantis. This is *National Enquirer* stuff...Everything is ridiculous backwards,' he drawls, smokily, 'except talk between men and women, which can go either way and still be meaningless...It's true. It's the only true and real thing in this book.'"
- 6. Analysis of plot structure: "*Time's Arrow* is an extended international Bildungsroman in reverse"

Tod, Odilo... Martin

*Tod Friendly, 6

John Young, 67-8

Hamilton de Souza, 101

*Odilo Unverdorben, 111

What do you think is the meaning of these names?

Brian Finney claims: “Above all there is the absurd reversal between the doctor's perfectly ethical medical practice in the United States and his lethal medical procedures at Auschwitz. In America he is called Tod Friendly. ‘Tod’ means ‘death’ in German. Amis explains his last name: “ ‘Friendly’ America, forgiving, forgetful America” (Bellante 16). His German name is Odilo Unverdorben. His surname in German means ‘uncorrupt, innocent,’ as if original sin were undone”

Another anonymous reviewer has said:

“the doctor, who, in defiance of his names, is neither unspoilt nor young (in the sense of innocent) nor friendly, is a prototype for a self-deceiving humanity that claims to heal but actually destroys”

Imaginary Reviews

- Chaucer
 - Keats
 - Brontë
 - Amis
- Shakespeare
 - Keats
 - Brontë
 - Amis
- Keats
 - Brontë
 - Amis
- Brontë
 - Keats
 - Amis
- Amis
 - Keats
 - Brontë

Next Class: REVIEW



- This coming Tuesday is our last class!
- No further reading or writing is assigned. Look over the five authors that we have read together and related materials: in class, we will review what we've done as a class so we can prepare for the final and complete class evaluations