

Introduction

Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* is a short novel about a protagonist who is actively participates in Holocaust as a Nazi Doctor in Concentration Camp at Auschwitz during the war. The short novel, *Time's Arrow* has been divided into three parts. The first part contains three chapters, second contains four chapters and final is constructed in a chapter. Each parts and chapters contain the different stages of the protagonist's life and his experiences in different places. The novelists ends with 'Afterword', where he gratitude for all the contributors for their support to bring this novel in its form.

The son of the novelist Kingsley Amis, Martin Amis, born in Oxford, England in 1949 is a British author spent his early years in Swansea, in south Wales where his father held a teaching position at Swansea University. The family spent a year in Princeton, New Jersey, in 1959, and then moved to Cambridge, England. Amis' parents were divorced when Amis was twelve, and this had a disruptive effect on his schooling. He attended a total of fourteen schools in six years. As a teenager, he had a brief acting career, appearing in the film *A High wind in Jamaica* (1965). In 1968, he entered Exeter College, Oxford, and graduated in 1971 with first-class honors in English. He then became editorial assistant for *The Times Literary Supplement*.

Amis has written a succession of novels, short stories, essays, and screenplays that marked him as one of the major writers of satire of his time. His first novel, *The Rachel Papers* (1973), has won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1974- an honor that his father had won 20 years earlier for his first novel, *Lucky Jim* (1954). Amis' other novels include *Dead Babies* (1976), *Dark Secrets* (1977) *Success* (1978), *Other people: A Mystery Story* (1984), a vivid and literate satire on 1980s decadence. Then, he wrote *London Fields* (1989), *Time's Arrow* (1991), *The Information* (1995), and

Night Train (1998). Collections of his short Stories include *Einstein's Monsters* (1978) an *Heavy Water* (1999). With *Experience* (2000), Amis has turned to notification. *The War Against Cliché* (2001) is a collection of his essays and reviews. He followed this with *Koba the Dread: Laughter and the Twenty Million* (2002), a personal take on the crimes committed by Soviet leader Joseph Satalin and the refusal of many in the West to acknowledge them. In the multi-stranded novel *Yellow Dog* (2003), a novelist undergoes a personality shift after being assaulted at a London pub. *The house of Meetings* (2006) is a novella about two brothers who are increased in the Soviet Gulag, and their love for the same woman; the volume also includes Amis's short story about the September, 11 Attack on New York City, "The Last Days of Muhammad Atta," which was first published in *The New Yorker*.

Time's Arrow is an unusual departure for Amis. Most contemporary writers deal with the past, he also does so but with a less realistic and more overtly moralistic approach than in his other novels. A Nazi doctor's life is told in reverse order from his death in the United States to his birth in Germany, though his true identity is not clear until more than half of the narrative. While many of Amis' narrators may not be completely reliable, the narrator of *Time's Arrow* is relatively innocent. The Nazi doctor's reverse life is narrated by his alter ego, who stands outside the action until finally merging with the protagonist near the end.

Time's Arrow begins in a Massachusetts hospital of USA on the deathbed of a 75 years old Nazi Doctor known as Tod T. Friendly. The rest of the book is an extensive flashback narrated in reverse order effect preceding the cause, later coming before or sooner. The entire short book is a novelistic form of palindrome.

Time's Arrow is shot in a straight line, backward. When Tod eats dinner, dessert precedes soup, and food is lifted out of the mouth and onto the plate,

sanitation workers deliver garbage, and adults snatch toys away from children. 'Good-bye' starts a conversation and 'hello' ends it. The story runs backward, but after a few initial flourishes, the novel makes a normal verbal sequence in the service of recounting statements and actions in reverse chronological order. It is shot from a target to a bow. Tod Friendly-whose name signifies the oxymoron of sociable death-is the last of the pseudonyms that Odilo Undverdorben, also known as Hamilton de Souza and John Young, adopts after fleeing the Nazi defeat in Europe. Before his abrupt departure, he participates in the gassings and sadistic experiments at Auschwitz. Abandoning a wife and child in Germany, he establishes a new identity for himself in The United States.

The story is narrated by an alter ego of the fugitive Nazi, a disembodied consciousness that comes alive while the protagonist is about to die. The narrator speaks as 'I' and the protagonist he calls 'he'. The narrator begins experiencing Tod's life backward; he has the sense of starting out on a terrible journey, toward a terrible secret. And, in the curious chronology by which doctor seems to cause affliction because patients are cured before their visit and ill afterward, he has trouble making sense of anything. It is only when he arrives at the terrible secret, Auschwitz, that Tod's experience becomes meaningful. Seen in reverse, the de-extinction of the Jews and their dispersion out of Concentration Camps, are perfectly logical. Projected backward, doctors routinely cause, rather than cure, illness and pain. 'put simply' says the narrator, who sees patients enter healthy and emerge sick. The hospital was an atrocity-producing situation in which doctors were atrocity producing agents. The atrocity will follow the atrocity, unstoppably as if fresh atrocity is necessary to validate the atrocity that comes before. In contrast to the hospitals where Unverdorben works secretly after fleeing the Nazi defeat, he concentration camp restores life,

health and meaning. The world after all, he in Auschwitz, has a new habit, wonders the narrator, it makes sense. By comparison, the postwar America in which he takes refuge is seen as a puzzling but pleasant place, a land of the bland.

Time's Arrow also deals with the question of identity in the twentieth century, as Tod Friendly progresses from an elderly, rather anonymous man into a Massachusetts physician into another physician. The time in New York City he identified as John Young; into an exile in Portugal named Hamilton de Souza; into his true identity as Odilo Unverdorben, a concentration-camp doctor and charge of the gloomy Auschwitz monster whom he calls Uncle Pepi. In telling Tod's increasingly complicated tale, Amis tries to encompass much of the history of the twentieth century with particular attention to the Vietnam War era and the Cold War. By telling the story backward, Amis explores such themes as the predictability of human communication, exemplified by conversations appearing with the sentences in reverse order: answers come before questions. Amis gets considerable comic mileage out of the horrifying images of such acts as eating and excreting depicted backward. In this ironic, perverse universe, suffering brings about joy. The narrator, one of several Amis doppelgangers, is alternately irritated and disgusted by Tod's behavior, particularly this crude treatment of his long time American lover, Irene. The narrator also professes his affection for and admiration of Jews before finally admitting that he and Unverdorben are one, a highly ironic means of accepting responsibility for one's actions;. Many critics have dismissed *Time's Arrow* as a narrative stunt. In an Afterword, Amis acknowledges that other writers have also employed reverse narratives, mentioning the famous account of a bomb travelling backward to its origins underground in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., as a particular influence. *Time's Arrow* is most notable for presenting less subtly Amis's

moral concerns, which have often been compared to those of Saul Bellow.

A lost future is at the heart of Amis' sense of the Post-Holocaust generation to which he belongs. The narrative methods and structure in *Time's Arrow* follow the conventions of the detective or mystery novel, the movement forward that is a going back, the reconstructed of the crime to use a video metaphor, the narrative structure of the novel is the 'reverse scan' implicit in the detective's quest. It is a replay of an action that has already happened.

The Novel *Time's Arrow* deals with the Holocaust act of the Nazi doctors in the concentration camp which the narrator remembers in the chronological reverse order. During World War II, German Nazis imprisoned between 7 million and 8 million people, mostly European Jews, in 22 concentration camps. By 1945, the Nazis had murdered more than 6 million of the inmates. Some were killed by firing squads, others died of starvation or as a result of experiments performed on them by German doctors and scientists and most died in poisonous gas chambers. When Allied forces liberated the camps in 1945, they found them littered with thousands of unburied dead. The majority of the survivors were suffering from disease or starvation. Amis here is successful to revisit the Holocaust through the narrator's experience as a Nazi doctor in the Auschwitz camp.

Amis' *Time's Arrow* has elicited much responses and criticisms from many critics. They criticize it from different angles and have published reviews, commentaries and criticisms giving their valuable opinions positioning the highly experimental fiction with a protagonist's alter ego (I) who tells the whole story of the protagonist (he) and his experiences from the tomb to the womb which he experienced in protagonist's lifetime.

Brian Finnelly comments that the Novel fulfills Amis's desire that history

could be reversed and the atrocities of mid-twentieth century undone.

And he further says “in his novel, temporality, rationality and causality are all inverted. The protagonist is characterized by his willingness to become a part of this consensus, to accept fascist ideology.”(59).

Dermot McCarthy views this novel as the frustrated Nazis who have committed a great crime to the people for that they are responsible. The novel questions the nature of the atrocity which has troubled the people during the Holocaust, this is what Amis does in the novel and further he says:

Time's Arrow raises the same moral and aesthetic questions about the nature of mimesis and the literary representations of atrocity which have always troubled Holocaust Fiction. Also, even though Amis himself seems to suggest, in his Afterward to the novel, that one motive for writing *Time's Arrow* was to contemplate the nature of the offence, any reader respecting profound relations about the nature and origins of the nature and origins of the evil committed by the Nazis will be disappointed. (294-295)

Adam Glaz sees the novel as absurd world like, where cause and effect have no relation where the effect is seen before the cause. Tod's criminal past life in present is haunted. Using absurd like world, the protagonist wants to remain unidentified and un-responsible; he further says:

There is a deeper layer to the reversal of time and action. Events may be described as happening in a sequence, but there is no cause-effect relationship between them, in the sense that the occurrence of one does not prepare that of another: things happen because they do rather than because other things do. In an absurd world like this, there is no room for planning, prediction, responsibility, ethics or morality; exactly an environment Tod Friendly needs and perhaps creates to remain

unidentified and un-responsible. (111-112). Sue Vice sees that there are two striking narrative features in *Time's Arrow* are: its backwards from and the first-person narrator, who is divided from his own body-are closely linked. There is no proper relation between the body and the soul of the same character, the action of the body and the thinking mind do not have same experience though they both share the same body. Further he writes:

This is more than narration based on Cartesian dualist principle, as the split here is not between mind and body. The narrator has no direct access to Tod Friendly's thoughts, although he can feel his emotion and his bodily experiences. The split is rather between the soul and the rest of the subject including his will. (24)

In Langer's view, "the literature of atrocity, by design and by its very nature, frustrates any attempt to discover a moral reality behind the events it narrates; its questions compel not 'answers,' but a reliving of the nightmare that inspired them" (56). There is a "moral reality" in *Time's Arrow*, however; it does not frame the narrative in the sense of providing the reader with a secure basis from which to understand and judge the events and actors; nor does it emerge from the narrative, created from the process of representing and re-imagining the events as story, and ultimately providing the fictive world with an ethos that renders it comprehensible. Rather, the moral reality in Amis' novel is a spectral presence, a fragment of memory, the dream that vanishes with the act of waking. It is a terrified moral reality: the same outraged and overwhelmed sensibility that speaks against the nuclear terror in his other writing of the period-and which seems to speak from a similar position of self-conscious weakness. The moral reality in *Time's Arrow* is to be found in the awe that attends Amis' sense of the "nature of the offences"; and what needs to be emphasized

is that, for him, the same “combination of the atavistic and the modern” (80) which characterizes the Nazi genocide is present in the strategies of the Cold War nuclear powers.

Though there are different criticisms and perspectives from different critics, my research focuses on the theme of the reversal of time which is subjected to an ironical treatment in Amis' *Time's Arrow*, which is about the Jewish Holocaust. Reversal of time; inversion of normal cause-effect relations; moral and aesthetic questions on the nature and mimesis and the literary representation of atrocity are inflected with the ironical treatment.

Irony: A Theoretical Perspective

Irony is a gap between saying and said, between speaking position and posited truth. It is also the mocking and complaining use of word to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. It is more generally distancing oneself from the message one conveys. Irony, a discursive strategy, comprises a social and political scene and examines “how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connect with power” and “interwines irony with wider historical and social-cultural contexts” (Gurung 19).

Irony is not just one thing and meaning another. It is an insistence that what we say must have *some* meaning; that we cannot just offer wisdoms and definitions as rhetorical strategies without commitment of what they mean. The rhetorical dimension of irony came into being in Socratic dialogue for the first time which was later known to be Socratic irony. Socratic irony refers to Socratic simulated ignorance in order to enrich his arguments. Socratic irony is engendered from speaker’s pretence ‘to be ignorant...under the guise of seeking to be taught by others. But, ultimately s/he teaches other are by “... investigating the things beneath to the earth and in the heavens...” (Muecke 9). Socratic irony is self criticism through pretended ignorance in a discussion, pretended in order to advance the search for truth. Socratic irony hides a skeptical, non committal attitude towards some opinions lacking reason at their basis. The ironic effects of such an irony are enriched by audience’s knowledge that the speaker is wiser than s/she permits himself/herself to appear. The Socratic irony was also adopted by Cicero and Quintilian.

Irony is a figure of speech in the form of an expression in which the use of words is the opposite of the thought in the speaker’s mind, thus conveying a meaning that contradicts the literal definition. Verbal irony comes out from the superficial use

of language intending a sharp contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. Verbal irony, either spoke or written, arises from an awareness of contrast between what is and what ought to be. As Abrams defines: “verbal irony is a statement in which the meaning that a speaker implies differs sharply from the meaning that is ostensibly expressed” (135). Bishop Thirlwall also has similar view with Abrams. Thriwall sees verbal irony as “a figure which enables a speaker to convey his meaning with greater force by means of contrast between the thought and his expression, or to speak more accurately, between the thought and his expression, or to speak more accurately, between the thought which he evidently designs to express, and that which his words properly signify” (Qtd. in Hutcheon 35). Simply, it is said to be a verbal irony if it is used to strengthen a statement by forcing the listener or reader to seek its true meaning.

In most of the cases of irony, the speaker seems to be asserting one thing but wants the intelligent reader or listener to realize that he is really asserting something quite different. It makes us compel to look at the contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. It is a figure of speech that brings a straight forward case of an ironic reversal of the surface Statement. This is well supported by D.C. Muecke’s view in *Irony and the Ironic* as he says, “the simplest form of high-relief verbal irony is the antiphrastic praise for blame, for example the ‘congratulation!’ we offer to the ‘smart Alec’ who has let the side down” (56). When a teacher praises a student, who have score almost below than 10 out of 100 in each subject, for having excellent result in exam, makes a smart example of verbal irony bringing a quick and clear reversal. The teacher’s praise is not praise as it seems. So, the verbal irony depends on the ironist’s pretension for aiming to achieve maximum plausibility of his supposed meaning. Verbal irony is distinguished from related

phenomena such as situational irony and dramatic irony in that it is produced intentionally by speakers.

In many works, the authors may not use direct irony but we discover rather ironic tone and temper. The writer may remain detached as a vantage point, a quest god like figure viewing his own creation with smile. The author can study the contrast in human experiences tragically and comically. But sometime it is possible to employ the techniques without being ironic too and it can be done through the use of the satire. Satire is an artistic or literary expression, which generally aims to correct or reform either an individual or a society by means of ridicule showing the foolishness of an idea, manner, custom or tradition. For ironologist such as Fredrich Schlegel, August Wilhelm, Ludwig Tieck and Karl Solgar, Nature is “an infinitely teeming chaos an overflowing exhaustless vital energy” being in “process of becoming” with a dialectical process of continual creation and decreation, “while human being is “the created [and] soon to be decreated” with limited “thought” and “fixed language,” becomes unable to “acquire [any] permanent intellectual experimental leverages over” the world (Muecke 23). Irony implies itself in the incessant paradox of life against failure, and so on. In this context, no human beings can be an ironist in a true sense except as one who builds up of the illusion of reality destabilized by immediate shattering. Muecke summarizes the evolution of irony as follows:

We have seen the concept of irony enlarged in this romantic period beyond instrumental irony (someone being ironical) to include ... (Things seen or presented as ironic). These observable ironies- whether ironies of events, of character (self-ignorance, self betrayal) of situation, or of ideas (for example, the unseen inner contradiction of a philosophical system...), could be seen as a local or universal. They were all major developments, not least the development of the concept of ...cosmic

irony or general irony, the irony of the universe with man or individual as a victim.

(165)

Most of the linguistic and contemporary philosophical analysis of irony takes it as a form of speech and begins with an account of irony from a theory of speech acts. Such accounts focus on non-literary examples of irony and concern the recognition, use, effect and context of irony. Haverkate's 'A speech act analysis of irony' (77-109), for an account of irony which draws upon John Searle's theory of speech acts. For an analysis of irony in ordinary language use, which also draws in part from Searle's theory, in the analyses of irony of this type, including the brief mention of irony made by Searle, there is an emphasis on the intention and recognition of irony as well as a dependence on a notion of context. There is, however, a *problem* of intention, recognition and context which, is posed by the more complex instances of (usually literary) irony not considered by the speech act tradition. So, for example, somebody in a diplomatic context might say, "The window is open," meaning that there are opportunities for further negotiations. In yet another sort of case, a speaker might utter the sentence ironically. If all the windows were closed, somebody might utter that sentence ironically meaning the opposite of what the sentence means. In all of these sorts of cases there is a systematic set of relations between speaker meaning and sentence meaning.

Richard Rorty argues that irony is the only possible ethic of modern liberalism. We cannot believe in a foundation that would underlie the difference and specificity of cultures: 'we have no pre linguistic consciousness to which language needs to be adequate, no deep sense of how things are which it is the duty of philosophers to spell out in language' (Rorty 1989,21). We should recognize that 'we' are effects of the vocabulary we speak, and that we can only renew such vocabularies

from within: 'The ironist spends her time worrying about the possibility that she has been initiated into the wrong tribe, taught to play the wrong language game... But she cannot give a criterion of wrongness' (Rorty 75). Those who 'go Socratic Rorty' argues, try to renovate their language by an appeal to reality, but Rorty's ironist sees 'no reason to think that Socratic inquiry into the essence of justice or science or rationality will take one much beyond the language games of one's time' (Rorty ,76)

Irony, for Rorty, is not elevation above everyday speech; it is not a high literary technique that situates the author or speaker 'beyond' characters and speaking conditions. On the contrary, irony is a private attitude, awareness that one's language is just one language among others. He argues that adopting a tone of irony would allow for a plurality of stories and, further, that we would value a world in which competing accounts were possible. We would not be troubled by, nor would we violently react to, other narratives and language games. Irony allows us to inhabit our own context, acknowledge the existence of other contexts and enable our own context to be open, fluid and creative.

Irony, for Rorty, "healthy skepticism of one's own language game, a preparedness to adjust one's lexicon, refigure one's vocabulary and desist from positing any truth or representation outside language"(80). Irony is not a way of speaking or a style of language; it is an attitude adopted towards whatever vocabulary one speaks. For Rorty, the ironist recognizes that all we have are our ways of speaking and that 'there is nothing beyond our vocabularies. Rorty's idea of irony as a philosophical attitude is in many ways in accord with a long tradition (running from Socrates to Kierkegaard) that understands irony as a point of view adopted towards language or meaning. On the other hand, if we were to begin with ordinary language use and some of the recent linguistic and philosophical material on irony, we would

be inclined to define irony, like metaphor, as a peculiar type of speech act. It is common to say something like 'I was only speaking ironically', which signals that a non-literal use is being made of a word or expression.

One of the great achievements of Jacques Derrida's post-structuralism was its capacity to forge a path between these two styles of irony; a satirical irony that attacks the conventions of a specific context, and a broader Romantic or transcendental irony that aims to think beyond context. Derrida acknowledges both that each speech act is always located, specific and never detached from the forces of the world-never transcendental or pure. Post-structuralism appears as one possible response to the predicament of postmodern irony. If postmodern irony affirms the equal validity and ultimately groundless nature of all discourse, post-structuralism recognizes that one cannot speak from a position of groundlessness. Even the assertion that all values depend upon context constitutes itself as a position capable of revealing some trans-contextual truth.

According to Derrida, western metaphysics has been dominated by logocentrism, the project of grounding all life on what can be rendered meaningful, purposive, actual and present. Against this, Derrida argues that any thought of the forces that meaning can never entirely master those forces-and there will always be forces, both in language and without, whose effects may never be fully calculated. The potential or force of what we say may have consequences that go beyond what we intend and beyond what we recognize. This is what differentiates Derrida from both 'contextual' and pragmatic accounts of meaning, or those who look at language in terms of what it does and how it functions. Derrida, in contrast with pragmatism, insists that language and differences have tremors, effects and ruptures well beyond social intent and recognition. In terms of irony, his means that a word can mean or do

more than is intended; there can be a force other than explicit and literal meaning, but this cannot be reduced to an *other*, second or elevated meaning. We may use language to speak and represent the process that produces or generates the system of signs within which we think. Nor can we ever fully think or calculate the forces of our speech. There are always effects that exceed speech and intention.

Deconstructive irony has its basis on the conceptual framework of theories of Jacques Derrida and Paul De Man which exposes the impossibility of univocal and stable meaning. The old definition of irony saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary-is superseded by unstable irony. Here now irony is saying something in a way that activates not one but endless series of subversive interpretations. Based on the theoretical concept of Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida, the deconstructive irony exposes the impossibility of univocal and stable meaning, Linda Hutcheon comments on this connection:

Overt production of meaning through deferral and difference has been seen to point to the problematic nature of all language: from a purely semantic point of view, the ironic situation of plural separate meanings- the said together with unsaid held in suspension might challenge any notion of language as giving a direct one-to-one referential relation to any single reality outside itself. (57).

The above quote further clarifies that the deconstructive irony arises, as Pam Bahadur Gurung reminds, “in the mix of semantic meaning that constitute irony [thereby allowing] a way to think about ironic meaning as something in flux and not fixed” (16).

John Searle’s very brief description of irony as an indirect speech act defines irony in this way:

as a specific relation between speaker meaning and sentence meaning. And

most contemporary linguistic analysis of irony begins from a Searlean understanding of speech acts and context. Like metaphor, irony, it is argued, can be described from *within* a theory of meaning.”(89)

So irony is the expression of one’s meaning by saying something which is direct opposite of one’s thoughts, in order to make one’s remarks forceful.

Theorizing irony from the perspective of meaning, Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (1975) categorizes all type of ironies into stable and unstable irony. Stable irony is the irony whose ironic intention of the speaker is shared with the reader by some clues that serve the interpreter to unravel what is implied. The irony, in this sense covers all intentional, Socratic, verbal, structural, dramatic and cosmic irony which is univocal and fixed which say one thing and mean another. On the other hand the unstable irony lacks the fixity to offer the ground for fixed meaning. It is rather an attitude towards irony with the belief that there are no logos that can guarantee the fixity or determinacy of the implied meaning. It depends upon the different angles to look at it for the certainty of the meaning. So, unstable irony is quite closer to deconstructive irony.

Byron combined irony and satire. On the one hand, he used satire to expose all the high ideals of Romantic Striving, all the ideals of an elevated poetry. On the other hand, he used irony against a certain satirical tendency. Irony could still create some heroic or poetic ideal, but it would not be one of unmediated creation and self-becoming, not a romantic irony that has nothing outside itself. The Byronic irony hero is created both as an impossible and as a desirable ideal. Byron retains the Romantic value of thinking beyond the given and conventional world, but remains aware that there is always a context, style and limit to this irony. Swift is cited both as an ironist and a satirist precisely because he can at one and the same time be read as an

supporter of the enlightenment-in his attacks on conventions, authority and fixity of beliefs-and as an irrationalist. Swift's satire uses irony, or the limited and partial voices of his characters, in order to focus on those aspects. Byron's irony was satirical precisely because he retained the classical notion of irony as an identifiable figure with specific contextual force. His use of irony had a clear object: the philosophical or metaphysical tendency to speak as if one were elevated above the forces of the world.

Irony relies on the logic of the signifier: in order for a sign to mean it must have a lawfulness that transcends any specific speech act. Deleuze and Guattari insist that there was a history and a politics before the logic of the signifier, before the notion of a necessary system, structure, subjectivity or law to which 'we' are all necessarily submitted. Deleuze frequently refers to humor, and occasionally satire, as a tendency opposed to irony:

The first way of overturning the law is ironic, where irony appears as an art of principles, of ascent towards the principles and of overturning principles. The second is humour, which is an art of consequences and descents, of suspensions and falls. (Deleuze 5).

Instead of thinking in terms of the concept as a law that governs what we say, humour and satire focus on the bodies, particularities, noises and disruptions that are in excess of the system and law of speech. The viewpoint of irony, or the viewpoint that surveys the totality of history as the history of 'man'-the viewpoint that sees itself as a point within a insistence that universal man and the speaking subject are modern western illusions.

Irony is the adaptation of a point of view 'above' a context, allowing us to view the context from 'on high'. Deleuze sees humour not just as an opposite distinction between high and low has enabled us to think. Radical humour, or

Deleuze's 'superior irony', dissolves high low distinctions-such as the concept 'above' existence-in order to think of the play of surfaces. We tend to imagine life and narratives as relations among persons, their ideas and their intentions; and we understand irony as the elevation of an idea to an infinite principle-the words we say can have a meaning that goes beyond what we intend.

The latest sense of irony is a way of writing designed to leave open the question of what the literal meaning might signify. Now the old definition of irony saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary-is superseded. Irony has become a mode of life that is based on our recognition that experience is open to multiple interpretations, of which no one is simply right and that co-existence of incongruities is a part of the structure of our existence. Thus latest sense of irony says something in a way that activates not one but an endless series of subversive interpretations.

However irony can also be intentionally political. Irony is a "discursive practice or strategy" (Hutcheon 3). Irony as a discursive strategy comprises of a social and political scene and examines how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connect with power and intertwines irony with wider historical and socio-cultural context. Discursive communities make irony possible in interpretation – whether arising from the ironists' intention or from the rubbing together of the apparent said with the implied unsaid meaning. The social scene of irony makes its politics inevitable in the mix off the said meaning with the unsaid one. The politics of irony, therefore, is its discursive presence in the aesthetic, social, ethical, cultural, religious, economic, ideological and historical aspects of its contexts of use and interpretation.

The presence of discursive community is always a key in the use and the

interpretation of irony. The notion of discursive community:

[...] is not understood at all but acknowledges those enabling constraints of discursive contexts and foregrounds the particularities not only of space and time but of class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual choice- not to mention nationality, religion, age profession, and all the other micro political groupings. (92)

But this view of discursive community is a sense of overlapping and sometimes even conflicting communities or collectives. For Hutcheon, discursive communities can be defined as the “complex configuration of shared knowledge, beliefs, values, and communicative strategies”. This overlapping is the condition that makes the politics of irony possible. The politics of irony, therefore, for Hutcheon does not happen in “amiable communities” as it itself come into being in “contact zones” as the “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relationships of power”. In this sense, the entire multidimensional network has to be taken into account. The production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures that includes the rules of exclusion, classification, ordering and distribution. This is where the political use of irony gets heated within the social. Irony, as a cultural practice, involves forms of social practice of interaction between participants in particular situation.

So, irony happens in all kinds of discourse ranging from verbal, aural, visual to common speech to highly crafted aesthetic from of high art to popular culture. Irony is used and understood as a discursive practice or strategy, so the scene of irony is social and political that covers wider historical and cultural contexts and also examines how the knowledge that a particular discourse produces connects with

power. Placement and the displacement of the discursive communities and its shared knowledge, beliefs, values and communicative strategies are the causes to happen politics of irony. Irony's discursiveness comes out of the interpreter and the ironist as the agents who perform the act of attributing both meaning and motives, and do so in particular situation and context for a particular purpose and with particular means. Therefore this is the study which argues that politics of irony happens because of such a discursive communicative process in which irony itself comes into being in the relation between meanings, intensions and interpretation.

As irony invokes the notion of hierarchy and subordination judgment and moral superiority it explicitly sets up a relationship between ironist and audience which is its political nature. So the semantic and syntactic dimension of irony cannot be treated in isolation, without keeping only an eye on the receiver, but the other on the surrounding tension filled environments. From the view point of irony as a discursive strategy, it is not simply an anti-phrastic substitution of the unsaid for its opposite, the said which is then either set aside or partially effaced. Irony happens in the realm between and including both the said and unsaid as it values both.

For Hutcheon, irony is not and should not just be a disbelief or distance from what one says. Irony has a political and ethical force. One speaks the language of colonialism and reason ironically in order to display its violence, force and delimited viewpoint. However, this critical repetition does not only risk being unnoticed or misunderstood. It still allows the voice of colonialism to speak, even in quotation marks. Hutcheon herself can reach no conclusion on this issue. On the one hand she maintains the value of irony in creating a distance from western discourses and narratives of reason. It is precisely because, from a position of postmodern postcolonialism, one cannot find or desire a better position of truth and authority, that

one adopts irony to present any authority or history as one fiction among others. On the other hand, not only can such gestures and distancing and irony fail to be read, they also allow the west to keep speaking itself, even if one is speaking with a full sense of the violence and limits of one context.

The trans-ideological politics of irony emerges from the dynamic interplay of the *said* and the *unsaid*. The unsaid is concerned to the “oppressed, marginalized and colonized; it is not just unsaid, but unsayable within the hegemonic homogenous discourse” (Gurung 28). Irony, however, involves unspoken understanding cutting across professional lines. Irony has basically a corrective function. Thus, as D.C Muecke reminds, the politics of irony is “like a gyroscope that keeps life on even keel or straight course, restoring the balance when life is being taken too seriously ... [and] also destabilizing the excessively stable. Irony, thus, functions “as a guide and disciplinarian” (Gurung 28). So, irony has become an integral part of life which empowers and enhances in the fight against socio-political ills.

Irony can be used either to undercut or to reinforce both conservative and radical positions that trans-ideological nature of irony makes it vivid and clear. To put it more explicitly, irony can be provocative when its politics is conservative or authoritarian as easily as when its politics is oppositional or subversive. It demands on who is using and attributing and at whose expense it is seen to be. The politics of irony, in this sense, at once forces a distinction between irony that might function constructively to articulate a new oppositional position and irony that would work in a more negative and negativizing way, where the ironist would stand outside, in a position of power. The use of irony from the position of power, especially by the dominant authority generates irony’s conservative or authoritarian function. Such a use makes the irony as a weapon for negating, so it is large destructive. In this

context, the notion of irony as a negation appears to be held by almost every day who has been on the receiving end of an ironic attack or by those for whom the serious or the solemn and the univocal are the ideal. The totalitarian regime uses or attribute irony in order to materialize dangers in the protective cover of repressive irony.

Another radical trans-ideological political function of irony is oppositional or subversive. The oppositional functioning of irony is often connected to the view that it is a self critical, self-knowing, and self-reflective. It is used in a positive and constructively progressive way where in it is used as a powerful tool or even as a weapon in the fight against a dominant authority by demystifying or subverting the repression. Oppositional theorist like feminist, post colonialist, gay and lesbian theorist and other marginal use this function of irony. In such use, irony operates in a positive and constructively affirmative way. So, it is the mode of unsaid, the unheard. It has the potential to offer a challenge to the hierarchy of the very sites of discourse, a hierarchy based in social relationship of dominance. For Stallybrass and White, that challenges the capacity to undermine and torn upside down the “politically transformative power” (Hutcheon 30). The subversive or oppositional function of irony has become a most appropriate mode not only for politically suppressed groups but, more generally, for those with the divided allegiance that comes from their difference for the dominant norms of race, ethnicity, gender or sexual choice. Irony enables as Hutcheon further puts:

The marginalized can be heard by the centre, and yet keep its critical distance and thus unbalanced and undermine. The complexity and multivocality of signifying are seen as a means of critique of the metaphysical presupposition both of western white culture...and also of any black notions of the transcendental black subject, intrigal and whole. (31).

The subversive political function of irony gets justified in Terdiman's concept of

“counter discourse” (Hutcheon 184). Since irony functions as a potential and effective strategy of oppositionality and seeks to displace and destroy a dominant depiction of the world. In this view, subversive political irony relativizes the dominant authority and stability by approving its power. In this view, irony becomes radical and democratizing since it gives space for alternative reactions. Irony involves social interaction as an inquiring mode to avoid the single and dogmatic.

The hypothesis of the concept of irony’s political functioning in socio-culture contexts comes from Mikhail Bakhtin’s “idea of double-voicing or the dialogic” which suggests that the forms for transmitting speech cannot be treated in isolation from the means of its contextualized dialogizing, indissolubly knitted with one another (64). From the Bakhtinian view of dialogizing, it is irony in use, in discourse, which gets preference over irony as a textual strategy. In other words, it is “irony’s political functioning in contexts- in the sense of the more specific circumstantial, textual and intertextual environment of the text in question, “somewhat” broader than the pragmatic notion of contextual background – that generates overtones which facilitates an intercourse that enables the unsaid, enters into ironic political relation with the said” (Pandey, 387-88). The cutting edge of irony is always social and political that gets heated at the evaluating edge and provokes responses from those who get it and in those who become its but the victim of it. The relations of power based in relations of communication with issues ranging from exclusion to inclusion, intervention to evasion, thereby make the functioning of irony inevitably political. Gender, race, class and sexuality condition the use and the interpretation of the specific function of ironic meaning.

Reading literature ironically requires that we think beyond the traditional philosophical commitment to propositional, translatable and non-contradictory thinking, recognizing that truth is not simply there to be referred to by an innocent language. Truth requires thinking through the contradictory force of language, its essential difference from

both what is and what remains beyond question. To read literature ironically requires, however, the continued force of philosophy's truth and non-contradiction. We can only read texts ironically, seeing the tensions and relations between what is said and not-said, what is and is not the case, if we commit ourselves to a sense and truth towards which speech and language strive. There cannot, then, be a simple abandoning of the structure of truth and reason or the difference of irony in favour of a postmodern world of textuality, where signs coexist without conflict, hierarchy or tension.

Irony can, then, neither be achieved nor overcome. One cannot remain in a naively postmodern position above and beyond any discourse. The liberal ironist who has freed himself from metaphysical commitment, who speaks with an enlightened sense of his difference and distance from what he says, remains blind to the ways in which this discourse of detachment has its won attachments. Rorty's disengaged and sceptical pragmatist is, like Carter's [presented male gaze, always defined against the determination, fixity, identify and opacity of desires and bodies. At the same time, one cannot be simply at one with, or immanent to, a pure field of material difference. One cannot be postcolonial or postmodern, liberated from any position of decision or judgement. To be embodied is not an event of pure surface or becoming; one becomes in a certain style or manner. There is always a certain irony, always predicament of disjunction between what one is and what one means, both for oneself and for others.

So, irony, a theatrical tool, covers whole socio-political aspects to show or examine the hidden reality from the appearance of any contexts and situations through language. Sometime the real meaning is not an exact reversal of what actually is said. In that situation, the irony may lie somewhere between the literal meaning and its logical opposite. In the meantime, irony does not relate only the events but also the temperament and personality of person who observes the events of life that are radically resistant to purpose, production, creation, and reason.

Time Reversal in *Time's Arrow*: A Study in Structural-formal Irony

Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow*, as a work of Holocaust fiction, is as moving and disturbing as it is ingenious; indeed, it is Amis' narrative ingenuity that is responsible for the work's moral and emotional impact. What moves and disturbs the reader is the multitude of ironies that result from the reversal of time-the "narrative conceit" (Diedrick 164) that structures and drives the novel (1). In *Time's Arrow* the normal present-to-future progression becomes the movement from present to past and the normative convention of realistic fiction as the inability to foresee the future becomes the inability to recall the past. A narrator in Amis' *Einstein's monsters* describes the 20th-century as "the age when irony really came into its own" (37) and *Time's Arrow* is an ironic masterpiece if ever there was one.

The minor and major ironies generated by the time-reversal all follow from the most important effect of the trope-the reversal of all normal cause-effect relations. In this novel the minor things become major as the reverse becomes increasingly perverse. The irony is structural-formal when the reader recognizes that the novel is an inverted towards detailing the devolution of the protagonist and an autobiography told by an amnesiac but as might be expected, the trope results in an array of more locally comic, and then, grimly dark ironies. Indeed, the work's most disturbing effects are the epistemological and, ultimately, ontological uncertainties which are the cumulative impact of the narrative method.

Time's Arrow raises the same moral and aesthetic questions about the nature of mimesis and the literary representation of atrocity which have always troubled Holocaust fiction? Also, even though Amis himself seems to suggest, in his Afterword to the novel, that one motive for writing *Time's Arrow* was to contemplate "the nature of the offence", any reader expecting profound revelations about the

nature and origins of the evil committed by the Nazis will be disappointed. Amis is hardly original in his view that what was “unique” about the Nazi genocide was:

not ... its cruelty, nor ... its cowardice, but its style- ... its combination of the atavistic and the modern. It was, at once, reptilian and “logistical”. And although the offense was not definingly German, its style was. The National Socialists found the core of the reptile brain, and built an autobahn that went there. (80)

Nevertheless, there is no denying that Amis' novel re-sensitizes us to this particular history in a century of continuing mass violence; moreover, it is the way he tells the story that effects this sensitization. But the relation between Amis' understanding of “The nature of the offence” and his narrative method in *Time Arrow* is more complex than this. The narrative method based upon time-reversal expresses more than Time set backwards by the moral enormity of the Holocaust. Amis' sense of the nature of that offense is that it was a prelude to an even more unthinkable death and destruction.

The narrator-protagonist of *Time's Arrow* is a Nazi who participated in the atrocities of Auschwitz and then escaped to the United States following the war, where he has lived out his life under a number of aliases like the most recent being Tod Friendly. Actually his original name was Odilo Unverdorben. As time reverses at the moment of his death, he resumes consciousness but with no memory of his former life and it is only as this narrating consciousness relives Tod's life, backwards from his death, that we come to know his “terrible secret”(2). However, one of the subtlest ironies in the book that follows from the time-reversal coupled with the narrator's amnesia is that Amis can sublimate a post-Holocaust into a pre-Holocaust perspective. In *Time's Arrow* the past becomes the future and the future disappears. For Amis' representation of the Nazi Holocaust in *Time's Arrow* needs to be understood in

relation to what was clearly his over-riding concern in the 1980s: the threat of nuclear holocaust. The Holocaust that is inescapable for Tod Friendly is related to the one which Amis fears is a certainty in his and his children's future. The narration in *Times Arrow* works back from Amis' own historical moment to the Holocaust of WWII as the moral origin of his generation's postmodern condition.

Because of the extremes of its own effects-most disturbingly, perhaps, when genocide is replayed as genesis, *Time's Arrow*, ironically, has the power to move the reader beyond pathos to feelings of utter hopelessness. An obvious effect of the disappearance of the future that comes with time-reversal is a rigid determinism. But *Time's Arrow* is not simply mother whimper of the species in the face of the history it tries unsuccessfully to explain. To use the vernacular for a moment, the book chokes more than it whimpers; and what chokes it is Amis' rage at what has transpired since WWII despite our knowledge of the Holocaust. For our civilization's response to the Nazi genocide has been to perfect techniques of global destruction. It is this combination of deep rage and profound despair which ultimately sets the limits to the ironies in *Time's Arrow*; but the same emotions also impel Amis to take the artistic risks he does in this novel which ultimately reaffirms the capacity of narrative fiction not only to mirror a world of terrifying absurdity, but also to hold that world accountable.

According to Lawrence Langer, "No apparent rationality" is a major characteristic of literary representations of the Holocaust (22) and the time-reversal in *Time's Arrow* clearly falls into this tradition. For it produces a world that is irrationally chronological and illogically rational- a chronological world which not only captures the atmosphere and the landscape of atrocity but entralls the reader with its continuous transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar. In this respect,

Time's Arrow is an excellent example of the Russian Formalist concept of “defamiliarization.” In “Art as Technique,” Shklovsky argues that literature does not imitate the world so much as make it strange; the purpose of art is to help us “recover the sensation of life” lost because of the numbing effect of our daily routines (20). In *Time's Arrow*, what Amis' technique recovers is a moral sensation; his method defamiliarizes a specific moment in modern history for us and in the process re-sensitizes us to the magnitude of human evil manifested in it. The narrative proceeds toward this moral goal by steadily rendering life in general, as well as particular phenomena, uncannily familiar.

The scale of ironies in *Time's Arrow* moves from the simple to the complex and begins with the comic. Tabloid newspapers are delivered to their readers by garbage trucks (20). A meal occurs when:

you select a soiled dish, collect some scraps from the garbage, and settle down for a short wait. Various items get gulped up into my mouth, and after skilful massage with tongue and teeth I transfer them to the plate for additional sculpture with knife and fork and spoon. (19)

Shopping involves taking the various items to the supermarket, where “I am promptly and generously reimbursed for my pains. Then you tool down the aisles with trolley or basket, returning each can or packet to its rightful place” (6). Tod bolsters his income by taking from children:

Tod'll come on up. The toy, the squeaky duck or whatever, will be offered to him by the smiling child. Tod takes it. And backs away, with what I believe is called a shiteating grin. ... Then he heads for the store, to cash it in. For what? A couple of bucks. Can you believe this guy? He'll take candy from a baby, if there's fifty cents in it for him.

(23)

As the comic ironies become darker, however, they become satiric. A “Crisis Centre” is where women go looking for trouble:

If you want a crisis, just check in. The welts, the abrasions and black eyes get starker, more livid, until it is time for the women to return, in an ecstasy of distress, to the men who will suddenly heal them. Some require more specialized treatment. They stagger off and go and lie in a park or a basement or wherever, until men come along and rape them, and then they're okay again. (16)

In this chronological world, pollution is progress:

People all have jobs now, at the steel mill and the auto plant. They wash the wind. Just as they dean up all the trash and litter, they also clean up the earth and sky transmogrifying cars, turning tools, parts, weapons, bolts into carbon and iron. They've really got to grips with their environmental problems. ... (25)

This kind of satiric irony becomes more pointedly thematic when such apparent progress leads Tod to conclude that, for industrial laborers, “Work liberates: Friday evenings, as they move off towards it, how they laugh and shout and roll their shoulders” (57). The echo of the motto on the gate to Auschwitz, “Arbeit Macht Frei” (131), is a chilling reminder of where the novel is heading. So, too, are what could be called the prescient echoes of Nazism in Tod's thinking that:

when the world war comes-we'll be just right to fight it. We are, after all, a superb physical specimen. ... We're not club-footed or marxist or nuts. We have conscientious objections or anything of that kind. We're perfect. (59)

In the Auschwitz chapters, the chronology produces ironies that are best described as obscene.[8] Uncle Pepi, the Dr. Mengele character, like Shelley's Frankenstein "can knock together a human being out of the unlikeliest odds and ends" (142). The guards supervising the dressing of the women have a habit of touching them, usually to give them jewelry, but "at other times quite gratuitously. Oh, I think they mean it well enough. ... And it definitely has the effect of calming them down. One touch, there, and they go all numb..." (55). But it is the pathetic image of the young girls, surrounded by parents and grandparents, "Just made, and all raw from their genesis" which ushers in the most obscene irony generated by Amis' defamiliarization technique- the reversal of death and life (66).

At Auschwitz genocide becomes genesis: "Our preternatural purpose? To dream a race. To make a people from the weather. From thunder and from lightning. With gas, with electricity, with shit, with fire" (28). In an apotheosis of the reversed pollution metaphor from earlier in the novel, human bodies are sucked down into the ovens from the sky:

Thence ... the bodies were stacked carefully and, in my view, counter intuitively, with babies and children at the base of the pile, then the women and the elderly, and then the men. ... I always felt a gorgeous relief at the moment of first stirring. Then it was ugly again. Well, we cry and twist and are naked at both ends of life. We cry at both ends of life, while the doctor watches. It was I, Odilo Unverdorben, who personally removed the pellets of Zyklon B and entrusted them to the pharmacist in his white coat. (59-60)

Amis' irony pays unthinkable dividends of pain here as the narrator explains the separation of the men from the women, children and elderly:

The men, of course, as is right, walk a different path to recovery. ...
 There they go, to the day's work, with their heads bent back. I was
 puzzled at first but now I know why they do it, why they stretch their
 throats like that. They are looking for the souls of their mothers and
 their fathers, their women and their children, gathering in the heavens-
 awaiting human form, and union. ... (60-61)

The Auschwitz scenes extend motifs that appear earlier in the novel, most obviously those of excrement and of Tod's dream of the doctor in the white coat and black boots. But the most important motif repeated here is that of "making sense." At Auschwitz the narrator expects all his questions to find their answers: "How many times have I asked myself: when is the world going to start making sense?" (60) From the beginning of the story he has been a (dis)embodied voice: "My condition is a torn condition" (52). He speaks both from within and outside the character he represents. The always user-friendly names he goes by- Tod Friendly, John Young, Hamilton de Souza, Odilo Unverdorben- construct the self as always alias: He is travelling towards his secret. Parasite or passenger, I am travelling there with him. It will be bad. It will be bad, and not intelligible. But I will know one thing about it (and at least the certainty brings comfort):

I will know how bad the secret is. I will know the nature of the
 offence. Already I know this. I know that it is to do with trash and shit,
 and that it is wrong in time. (33)

Chronology makes dreams into acts of memory; the narrator's sense of himself as dreamer is of himself as another. Amis, who has been described as "the latest of Anglo-America's dualistic artists" (Miller 410), creates a narrator who speaks from and to himself as an embodiment of an other whom he knows but does not recognize.

It is this separation that makes Amis' use of the dream into a metaphor of anamnesis, knowledge as recognition.

In the *Meno*, Plato defines anamnesis as the recovery of latent or unconscious knowledge which the soul carries from life to life (81C-D). The gap between knowing and understanding is expressed in *Time's Arrow* through the metaphor of the narrator's amnesia. Tod Friendly (re)discovers his history, from which he is, in a sense, a kind of exile. His pathology is very much that described by Camus in *The Myth of Sisyphus*:

in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (qtd. in Langer 78)

Camus' sense of a lost home and of a lost future is at the heart of Amis' sense of the post-Holocaust generation to which he belongs. In Elie Wiesel's *The Fifth Son*, the protagonist, a son of Holocaust survivors, says: "Born after the War, I endure its effects. I suffer from an Event I did not even experience" (qtd. in Fine 41). Amis' narrative structure and method express this post-Holocaust perspective but in a way that complicates it even further by adding to its retrospective angst a sense that it is being robbed of the future as well. For Amis, his generation suffers from an event it did not experience, and will expire from one it seems powerless to prevent. Ellen Fine describes the post-Holocaust generation as "confronted with a difficult task: to imagine an event they have not lived through ..." (41), but Amis' sense of his generation's situation and of his own task as a writer leads him to imagine the unthinkable of human extinction.

Following the episodes at Auschwitz and Treblinka, where the narrator and we come to know Tod/Odilo's role in the Holocaust, "the ironic prophecies" (148) of Tod's dreams are fulfilled. The narrator's "premonition" that "Tod's cruelty, his secret, had to do with a central mistake about human bodies" (48) is confirmed and the world of nightmare begins to make nightmarish sense to us. The parallel between the narrator's movement from amnesia to Platonic anamnesis and the reader's gradual recognition of the plot is cemented by the need for understanding which links them. The narrator's question "when is this world going to start making sense?" is also the reader's. For Amis' narrative method of "making strange" forces us to share in the narrator's process of making sense, forces us to imagine the unthinkable, and so implicates us in the (re)discovery of horrors we already know but must acknowledge yet again.

This important and powerful motif of "making sense" in Tod's narrative derives its power, paradoxically, from the way Amis' chronological method takes the world and makes it strange. However, the constant manufacturing of the uncanny in *Time's Arrow* ironically tends to subvert the complicity which Langer (22) considers a moral-emotional effect of Holocaust fiction by undermining the credulity upon which the complicity depends. For, as Amis builds upon the possibilities of the chronological world, the effect is more than uncanny. When people attach nail clippings to their fingertips and a car accident is an intentional act; when an emergency ward doctor performs his duty by driving a nail into someone's head; when earthquakes erect cities and childbirth is "the long goodbye to babies" (41); when letters emerge from the fireplace or garbage can, or arrive from Tod himself, whose pen moves across the page erasing the words while tears rise from it and are taken into his eyes, then the irony begins to generate ontological instability. This instability

reaches critical mass as the epistemological doubt which has characterized the narrative voice from the beginning of the novel reaches its apotheosis in the Auschwitz sections, and the ironies produced by the reversal of Time's Arrow generate a similar disorientation in the reader, who experiences a similar ontological uncertainty during these climactic episodes.(9)

There is a paradoxical moral logic behind Amis' rendering our own history strange to us. While the chronology in *Time's Arrow* produces a narrative world that constantly draws attention to itself as Active, and as a consequence, generates a distance between it and the reader; and while this distance militates against a sense of moral complicity, it does not need to be seen as a moral lack in Amis' novel. Rather the chronology in *Time's Arrow* can be seen as expressive of Amis' sense of the historical gap between his post-Holocaust generation and its predecessor, and of his sense not only of his generation's relation to the Holocaust which is not one of complicity but also of the Holocaust's relation to the postwar world. The chronology puts us in precisely the same relation to 20th-century-history as the narrator finds himself in relation to Tod; it is simultaneously our history and an other's. The "terrible journey" back into WWII and the Nazi Holocaust taken by the narrator is a mirror inversion of the journey Amis sees his own generation taking toward nuclear holocaust. It is at this point that we can see Amis' narrative method in *Time's Arrow* as expressive of one of the earliest theorizations of the postmodern condition- Lyotard's sense of "the crisis of narratives" (xxiii) in postmodern culture. According to Lyotard, "The narrative function is losing its factors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal" (xxix). Amis' reversal of the alpha-omega linearity of Aristotelian plot reflects the cancellation of the future by the threat of nuclear destruction; as he puts it in *Einstein's Monsters*- "The A-bomb is a Z-bomb" (

22). Hence, in *Time's Arrow* the once and future hero is a mass-murderer, the great danger is moral consciousness, the great voyage is escape, the great goal, death. As a postwar "baby boomer," Amis writes from his side of that historical divide. He is a victim of the world that produced the Holocaust and that the Holocaust produced; he sees that catastrophe as the beginning of his own postwar moral environment: the world of the Cold War and its aftermath. For Amis, the diabolical conundrum of the Nazi Holocaust is also the unthinkable but clearly imaginable horror of his own generation—the invention, use, development and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Amis' narrative method in *Time's Arrow* is a high risk gamble because the chronology not only defamiliarizes the historical world it imitates, it destabilizes the fundamental conventions of mimesis upon which all narrative relies. That instability is the cause of powerful aesthetic effects, but it also jeopardizes the project by subverting our faith in the capacity of narrative to encode meaning within representation. There is a danger in *Time's Arrow* that the reader ultimately could be rendered morally numb to the shocks the novel delivers by the despair or nihilism which its narrative method also produces. This would be post-modern irony with a vengeance. But, to follow out the illogic of Amis' system of ironies, perhaps the failure to make sense here is success. To explain the Holocaust would be a crime of art in which the nature of the offense would be, ultimately, mimesis itself. Moreover, explanation seems less Amis' concern than warning. Irving Howe has remarked that:

There is little likelihood of finding a rational structure of explanation for the Holocaust: it forms a sequence of events without historical or moral precedent. To think about ways in which the literary imagination might "use" the Holocaust is to entangle ourselves with a multitude of problems for which no aesthetic can prepare us. (68)

But while it would be misleading to say that, in *Time's Arrow*, Amis has used the Holocaust as narrative material in the sense of reducing it to a subject or theme, his approach to that sequence of events without historical or moral precedent is to understand it as itself becoming a precedent for nuclear holocaust.

For Howe, as for Geoffrey Hartman, the problem facing the fiction writer who attempts to write about the Holocaust is one of conceptualization, not representation; it is the problem of “making sense”:

the novelist ... must-precisely in order to tell a story- “make sense” of his materials, either through explicit theory or, what is usually better, absorbed assumptions. Otherwise, no matter how vivid his style or sincere his feelings, he will finally be at a loss. (Howe 188–89)

As his remarks about the docu-fiction of Capote and Mailer suggest, Amis himself is clearly aware of this problem when writing about a historical subject:

What is missing [from their work] ... is moral imagination, moral artistry. The facts cannot be arranged to give them moral point. When the reading experience is over, you are left, simply, with murder-and with the human messiness and futility that attends all death. (*The Moronic Inferno* 39)

The “nature of the offence” that Amis encounters in the Holocaust is that the Germans transformed “the human messiness and futility that attends all death” into a terrifying human order and purpose. Amis would seem to agree with Howe that, in art, what transforms the messiness and futility of death into the order and meaning of fiction is “a structuring set of ethical premises, to which are subordinately linked aesthetic biases, through which [the novelist] can form (that is, integrate) his materials” (Howe 188).

Langer views, “the literature of atrocity, by design and by its very nature, frustrates any attempt to discover a moral reality behind the events it narrates; its questions compel not ‘answers,’ but a reliving of the nightmare that inspired them” (56). There is a “moral reality” in *Time’s Arrow*, however; it does not frame the narrative in the sense of providing the reader with a secure basis from which to understand and judge the events and actors; nor does it emerge from the narrative, created from the process of representing and re-imagining the events as story, and ultimately providing the fictive world with an ethos that renders it comprehensible. Rather, the moral reality in Amis’ novel is a spectral presence, a fragment of memory, the dream that vanishes with the act of waking. It is a terrified moral reality: the same outraged and overwhelmed sensibility that speaks against the nuclear terror in his other writing of the period-and which seems to speak from a similar position of self-conscious weakness. The moral reality in *Time’s Arrow* is to be found in the awe that attends Amis’ sense of the “nature of the offences”; and what needs to be emphasized is that, for him, the same “combination of the atavistic and the modern” (80) which characterizes the Nazi genocide is present in the strategies of the Cold War nuclear powers. High-tech reptiles brought mankind low in the Nazi era, and their successors pose an even greater threat to-day. The Nazi industrialization/institutionalization of evil as a system of genocide has its counterpart, for Amis, in the planning of nuclear warfare by the super-powers. At the end of his 1987 essay, “Nuclear City: the Megadeath Intellectuals,” Amis writes: “However far you go into nuclear weapons, there is no understanding to be had, only more knowledge” (Visiting Mrs. Nabokov 32); and the same can be said for the Holocaust.

The narrative method and structure in *Time’s Arrow* follow the conventions of the detective or mystery novel-the movement forward that is a going back, the

“reconstruction of the crime.” To use a video metaphor, the narrative structure of the novel is the “reverse scan” implicit in the detective’s quest: *Time’s Arrow* is a replay of an action that has already happened. The I/him split in the narrator’s consciousness perfectly expresses the gap between amnesia and anamnesis which the narrative closes when the narrator as amnesiac detective discovers that he is the criminal he has been seeking. In terms of the myth that underwrites the detective’s quest, Theseus recognizes himself in the monster he discovers, and the monstrosity at the centre of the maze is as much the mirror of narrative itself as it is the self reflected within it (10). His narrator’s condition may be Amis’ comment on contemporary historical sensibility, the woeful historical ignorance amongst contemporary youth, or the ignorance/indifference of their educators, but the narrator-detective’s belatedness is also the necessary precondition for his ironic knowledge. The dissociation of sensibility from which he suffers is, chronologically, both cause and effect of his forgotten knowledge: “... Tod can’t feel, won’t connect, never opens up, always holds something back” from himself, the narrator (61).

In *The Information* (1995), the novel Amis wrote after *Time’s Arrow*, the narrator spends his days anxiously seeking information he knows exists but which he cannot access. He must wait for it to unfold in time. And this is precisely what Amis’ narrative trope in *Time’s Arrow* enacts: the unfolding or unpacking of time. Moreover, once we recognize how the template of the detective mystery underlies the narrative structure, it is also possible to see behind Amis’ construction of the narrator the figure of the interrogator. The chronological method, however, inverts the paradigm and its conventions: the interrogator interrogates himself and undergoes his own torture. *Time’s Arrow* moves from history to the end of history, but as the narrative development turns on the greatest of all possible reversals, the reversal of

time, the end of history is its beginning. Paradoxically, the linearity of the narrative method reveals a terrifying circularity, terrifying because beginning and end coincide at a point of identity and repetition.

Repetition and identity are figures in another interrogative paradigm of our century: psychoanalytical talking cure. The mystery genre is a major narrative form in the 20th-century in which epistemological issues are dominant, but so, too, is the psychoanalytic “case history,” and the latter also seems to underwrite Amis’ form in *Time’s Arrow*. Although a character tells Tod that “he has no soul” (62), the narrator could be considered as just that, Tod’s soul, or a level of consciousness that is as gradually informed by the preconscious as it is constantly tormented by the repressed unconscious. The psychoanalytic nature of the narrator’s quest for understanding becomes explicit when he complains that “There’s another language, a second language, here in Tod’s head. We sometimes dream in that language too” (15); but, of course, he does not understand the language of the dream. Like the analysand, Tod must wait for the information to arrive, information which when it does come clear, is as much produced from within himself as it is received from the other who is also himself. But as with everything else, chronology makes *Time’s Arrow* an ironic form of the “talking cure” because it produces narration that mimics as it undermines the therapeutic norm- moving as it does from the articulate to pre-articulate. The end is a terrible silence, the muted significance of smoke above a crematorium.

Amis’ narrator-as-detective discovers that he is not only the criminal he seeks but the victim as well. The narrator, however, is not only the protagonist’s double and the reader’s secret sharer; as (almost) self-conscious storyteller, he is also the figure of the novelist-within-the-novel, and it is here that the metafictional consequences of Amis’ ironic method begin to play havoc with his project. Amis’ method ultimately

critiques all the narrative structures and methodologies which underwrite it-literature, myth, religion, psychoanalysis- and leads to the novel's self-defeat: the recognition that its subject remains beyond the power of narrative- is untellable. From a postmodernist point of view, this self-defeat is necessary. There are no credible master narratives any more, only usable- and so disposable-fictions. For Amis, to have attempted to render this history as narrative in any traditional sense would have been to repeat the original crime of the Final Solution, which was to emplot genocide, to make the unthinkable imaginable within the frame of a grand recite- the Third Reich. The narrative flight of *Time's Arrow* ultimately disappears into thin air because it knows the limits of emplotment, the limits of making sense. It should be emphasized, however, that the novel does not do this to mystify the history, for the effect is quite the contrary: through its many and complex ironies, *Time's Arrow* reaffirms the mystery of fiction as a practice whose value to the species depends upon the recognition of fundamental limits. As Amis himself has asserted: literature represents "The best that humans can do.... The best moral thought" (McGrath 196). There are some things which, to tell as story, would put our very humanity at risk.

This helps explain, perhaps, the profoundly troubling ambiguity in the final sentences of the novel, an ambiguity which is only partly caused by the chronological trope itself. The narrator reports that:

When Odilo closes his eyes I see an arrow fly- but wrongly.

Point-first. Oh no, but then.... We're away once more, over the field.

Odilo Unverdorben and his eager heart. And I within, who came at the wrong time-either too soon, or after it was all too late. (79)

"Too soon" and "too late" (79) are temporal markers impossible to stabilize by this point in the novel. What time zone do they refer to? There is no way

that the narrator could have stopped Tod in time from becoming Odilo or Odilo from becoming Tod Friendly. On the metafictional level, this inevitability points to the impotence of strictly historical narrative to be anything more than repetition. At one point in his ironic anamnesis, the narrator speculates about the nature of mimesis and so about the art form in which he is himself an unconscious figure:

Like writing, paintings seem to hint at a topsy-turvy world in which, so to speak, *Time's Arrow* moves the other way. The invisible speedlines suggest a different nexus of sequence and process. That thought again. It always strangely disquiets me. I wonder: is this the case with all the arts? (40)

The hermeneutic vertigo that this passage creates—in looking into the world of art, the narrator is looking outward to the world of the reader—is an instance of what McHale means when he describes how a postmodernist novel can push epistemological questions so far that they tip over into ontological questions. The passage raises exactly the kind of questions that McHale argues the postmodern novel asks:

What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? How is a projected world structured? (10)

The topsy-turvy world of art that Amis' narrator notices is in fact our world, and at this point, Amis' irony blows a heuristic fuse. The narrator speculates that his world might not make sense until understood in the inverted image of art; that inverted image, however, would be the world of history that Amis has attempted to make intelligible through the topsy-turvy chronology of the narrative. But neither “nexus of

sequence and process”, fiction or history, makes sense in the ways the narrator and we need them to (40). The arrow of time the narrator sees flying at him “wrongly. Point first” is arriving from our world (79). The ironic limit here is that if the narrator's world of horror is reality, then our world, its strangely disquieting reflection, is the moral and metaphysical nightmare which makes sense of it. This, of course, is the beginning point of Amis' metafictional experiment, but as this passage shows, the novel cannot progress beyond its own circularity. Amis' narrative structure makes mimesis into a trap; there is no progress, only the regress of endless repetition. The metafictional horror in *Time's Arrow* is the narrative equivalent of the visual conundrum of an Escher drawing, in which foreground-background distinctions are impossible to fix: the past seems to emerge from the present, the present to move into the past. There is no escape from history because it is always about to happen.

When genocide is seen to make sense as genesis, *Time's Arrow* reaches an ironic limit that is the limit of the narrative project itself—the novel whose genesis has been the Nazi genocide. In Chapter 5, Tod begins his account of arriving at Auschwitz Central with the ironically hopeful expectation that now “The world is going to start making sense . . .” (64); following the detailed description of the activities in the camp in the chapter, he begins Chapter 6 with: “Well, how do you follow that?” (46) The rhetorical question is an ironic reprise of Adorno's famous remark: “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric” (34); and the narrator's answer: “you can't. Of course you can't,” urges the reader to consider the metafictional dimension of the novel.

Amis' chronological method in *Time's Arrow* shows that he is one of these “cannier writers”: the reverse chronology of his fictive mirror-world allows us both to look at history obliquely and to think about the unthinkable. But although Howe's reading of the myth of Perseus and Medusa as an allegory of mimesis is profoundly

suggestive, it is surprising that he does not consider a form of the unapproachable/inexpressible closer to the culture and myths of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust-namely, the Tetragrammaton, the four consonants of the name of God-“Yahweh”-which cannot be pronounced but must be said only through a substitute, “Adonai.” When written, the four vowels of the latter are combined with the four consonants of the former to produce “Jehovah.”[18] The sign “Jehovah” covers its referent by simultaneously expressing and concealing it and this ironic signification is a precise analogue to the narrative form of *Time’s Arrow*, which presents the Holocaust through a veil of irony. Of course, to connect the Holocaust and the name of God in this way-except in the darkest of theologies-is more absurd than blasphemous, [19] but in a sense there is something heretical in a line of thought which connects the Nazi genocide and the threat of nuclear holocaust and which regards the Holocaust as an event in the moral history of the human species more than as an exclusively Jewish catastrophe.

It should be pointed out as well that the connection in Amis' thinking between the Nazi Holocaust and the threat of nuclear holocaust also would have been strengthened by his reading of Robert Jay Lifton's *The Nazi Doctors*. Diedrick has pointed out how “virtually every aspect of *Time’s Arrow* -historical setting, plot, characterization, even language-is informed by [Lifton’s book]” (73); but what is not recognized is that Amis' reading of Lifton's study of the psychopathology of Nazi genocide would also have strengthened the connection in his mind between that history and an eventual nuclear apocalypse. Lifton suggests that the value of his study of the Nazi doctors is that it may lead to a more general psychology of genocide:

If there is any truth to the psychological and moral judgments we make about the specific and unique characteristics of Nazi mass murder, we

are bound to derive from them principles that apply more widely- principles that speak to the extraordinary threat and potential for self-annihilation that now haunt humankind. (417 emphasis added)

Lifton too, it seems, sees a continuity between the Nazi Holocaust and the threat of nuclear holocaust; and the “megadeath intellectuals” Amis interviews and describes in his essay, “Nuclear City,” in *The Moronic Inferno*, clearly exemplify Lifton's description of what occurs when professionals in the arms race undergo the “doubling” that produces a “nuclear-weapons self” (20).

Blasphemous, heretical, Swiftian, absurdist-however we label the irony in *Time's Arrow*, the effects Amis' chronology produces are fundamental to the novel's artistic success and significance. Some of the effects are comic and, to a certain extent, there is a comic element in all the inversions which result from the narrative method. In *Holocaust Laughter?* Terence Des Pres distinguishes between realistic and comic mimesis: the former is compelled, paradoxically, to reproduce the world it seeks to displace; while the latter generates a laughter which “is hostile to the world it depicts and subverts the respect on which representation depends” (80). While Amis' narrative method in *Time's Arrow* subverts mimesis, it does not express disrespect for the history it represents; moreover, within the limits it probes and discovers, the irony-even when obscene, ironically-is appropriate for the moral and aesthetic goals the novel seems to have set itself.

Des Pres argues that the tragic mode is mimetic and “elevates what is,” whereas “the comic spirit proceeds in an antimimetic mode that mocks what is”:

Tragic seriousness, with its endorsement of terror and pity, accepts the terrible weight of what happens. There is thus a connection between solemnity and reverent regard for the burden of the past, a sense of

responsibility, perhaps also of guilt, that unites us with the scene of suffering and quiets us with awe. (220)

Amis' ironic method in *Time's Arrow* is simultaneously mimetic and anti-mimetic, and consequently, places the reader, uncomfortably, uncannily, between the tragic and comic poles of moral/aesthetic experience. The effect of this awkwardness is that the reader is not moved, in the tradition of tragic experience, to accept "the terrible weight of what happens"(220). The last thing Amis wants to do with *Time's Arrow* is quiet the reader with awe in the face of this century's terrible history; rather, he wants to awaken the reader to the terrible continuity between the Nazi Holocaust and the imminent holocaust of nuclear war.

Ironies follow from the time-reversal coupled with the narrator's amnesia that Amis can sublimate a post-Holocaust into a pre-Holocaust perspective. In *Time's Arrow* the past becomes the future and the future disappears. For Amis' representation of the Nazi Holocaust in *Time's Arrow* needs to be understood in relation to what was clearly his over-riding concern in the 1980s: the threat of nuclear holocaust. The Holocaust that is inescapable for Tod Friendly is related to the one which Amis fears is a certainty in his and his children's future. The narration in *Times Arrow* works back from Amis' own historical moment to the Holocaust of WWII as the moral origin of his generation's postmodern condition. *Time's Arrow*, ironically, has the power to move the reader beyond pathos to feelings of utter hopelessness. An obvious effect of the disappearance of the future that comes with time-reversal is a rigid determinism. For our civilization's response to the Nazi genocide has been to perfect techniques of global destruction. It is this combination of deep rage and profound despair which ultimately sets the limits to the ironies in *Time's Arrow*.

Conclusion

Irony is a gap between saying and said, between speaking position and posited truth. It is also the mocking and complaining use of word to convey the opposite of their literal meaning. It is more generally distancing oneself from the message one conveys. Irony is not just one thing and meaning another. It is an insistence that what we say must have *some* meaning; that we cannot just offer wisdoms and definitions as rhetorical strategies without commitment of what they mean. In most of the cases of irony, the speaker seems to be asserting one thing but wants the intelligent reader or listener to realize that he is really asserting something quite different. It makes us compel to look at the contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. It is a figure of speech that brings a straight forward case of an ironic reversal of the surface Statement.

As a work of Holocaust fiction, Martin Amis' *Time's Arrow* is as moving and disturbing as it is ingenious; indeed, it is Amis' narrative ingenuity that is responsible for the work's moral and emotional impact. What moves and disturbs the reader is the multitude of ironies that result from the reversal of time that structures and drives the novel. In *Time's Arrow* the normal present-to-future progression becomes the movement from present to past and the normative convention of realistic fiction becomes the inability to recall the past. The minor and major ironies generated by the time-reversal all follow from the most important effect of the trope-the reversal of all normal cause-effect relations. The minor become major as the reverse becomes increasingly perverse. The irony is structural-formal when the reader recognizes that the novel is an inverted 'detailing the devolution of the protagonist' and an autobiography told by an amnesiac; but as might be expected, the trope results in an array of more locally comic, and then, grimly dark ironies. Indeed, the work's most

disturbing effects are the epistemological and, ultimately, ontological uncertainties which are the cumulative impact of the narrative method.

Time's Arrow, ironically, has the power to move the reader beyond pathos to feelings of utter hopelessness. An obvious effect of the disappearance of the future that comes with time-reversal is a rigid determinism. But *Time's Arrow* is not simply mother whimper of the species in the face of the history it tries unsuccessfully to explain. To use the vernacular for a moment, the book chokes more than it whimpers; and what chokes it is Amis' rage at what has transpired since WWII despite our knowledge of the Holocaust. For our civilization's response to the Nazi genocide has been to perfect techniques of global destruction. It is this combination of deep rage and profound despair which ultimately sets the limits to the ironies in *Time's Arrow*; but the same emotions also impel Amis to take the artistic risks he does in this novel which ultimately reaffirms the capacity of narrative fiction not only to mirror a world of terrifying absurdity, but also to hold that world accountable.

The protagonist's last name Tod T. Friendly is a Nazi doctor in Holocaust during the war. He spends his time during the Holocaust in Nazi concentration camps, where he is supposed to participate in many criminal acts. In a terrific, horrific and awful condition to the hospital, he can never think of any humanity, rather he actively participates in atrocity producing situation. To the profession of doctors, he calls it, 'atrocity producing agents'. Because of the hopeless mind of the protagonist after being defeat in Holocaust, he flees to different countries by hiding his identity and profession. Even more, he tries to forget everything of the past along with his nation, family and child by deleting his identity and duties. In it the past becomes the future and the future disappears and that is Amis' terrible secret. The arrow is shot in a straight line, backward. When Tod eats dinner, dessert precedes soup, and food is

lifted out of the mouth and onto the plate, sanitation workers deliver garbage, and adults snatch toys away from children. Good-bye starts a conversation; 'hello' ends it. The story does run backward, but, after a few initial flourishes the novel develops with a normal verbal sequence in the service of recounting statements and actions in reverse chronological order. It shot from target to bow. These all show the subtle irony in the text.

So, irony, covers whole socio-political aspects to show or examine the hidden reality from the appearance of any contexts and situations through language. Amis' ironic method in *Time's Arrow* is simultaneously mimetic and anti-mimetic, and consequently, places the reader, uncomfortably, uncannily, between the tragic and comic poles of moral and aesthetic experience.

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