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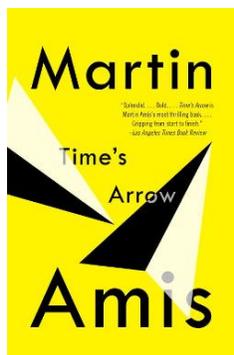
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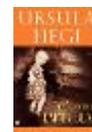
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Overview

From Follett

Story of Tod T. Friendly, now living in a peaceful American suburb, but who once worked in the medical section of Auschwitz.

From the Publisher

In Time's Arrow the doctor Tod T. Friendly dies and then feels markedly better, breaks up with his lovers as a prelude to seducing them, and mangles his patients before he sends them home. And all the while Tod's life races backward toward the one appalling moment in modern history when such reversals make sense.

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Product Details

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Reviews & Awards

Booklist starred
New York Times

Wilson's Fiction, 10/01/10

Full-Text Reviews

Kirkus Reviews (1991)

Amis this time writes about Tod Friendly, a.k.a John Young, a.k.a Odilo Unverdorben—a doctor with a chilling past no one knows about: he was a medical experimenter under Mengele at Auschwitz. No one knows—that is, except his soul, his conscience, which narrates this book: backwards. Literally backwards—not in flashbacks, but everything like a film run in reverse, with construction become destruction, age become youth, horror become innocence. "You want to know what I do?" asks the narrator during his stint as trauma doctor. "All right. Some guy comes in with a bandage around his head. We don't mess about. We'll soon have that off. He's got a hole in his head. So what do we do. We stick a nail in it. Get the nail—a good rusty one—from the trash or whatever. And lead him out to the Waiting Room where he's allowed to linger and holler for a while before we ferry him back to the night. Already we're busy with this baglady we've got, welding sock and shoe plastic on to the soles of her evil feet." Dialogue is equally in reverse order, so that you learn the trick of reading up from the page to get the full effect. The problem here is that Amis's cleverness has a glare-y insistence to it that undercuts the moralism it means to reflect. Like London Fields, the book is mostly at home in contemporary jeremiad: about New York, about modern sex, about the homeless, about the horror that doctors so blithely encounter. The Auschwitz material, coming last, also comes least—weakened by the narration's trickiness into seeming inevitable (though Amis puts a psychosexual spin on its roots, à la the Reichianism of his mentor Saul Bellow) and inhospitable to the stylistic flair that Amis can impart to even the worst contemporary sins. The chipped impressionism simply and unimpressively reads like the worst facts culled from the great annals of Martin Gilbert and Lucy Dawidowicz. Amis's particularity as a writer—the ethical outrage plus the gorgeously soiled, infinitely plastic style—is still remarkable: but his nimbleness on the stage of the global, historical, Big Picture theater serves him less and less well. The Holocaust couldn't care less about his ingenuity, which turns terribilità into mere tour de force.

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