

Backwardsness

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 02 Sep 1998

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Robert Borski — 02 Sep 1998, 20:34

mantis having written earlier:

"I understand that Merlin is said to be living backwards in time. And this device has since been used by writers. So I don't know . . . it is certainly possible, but I think it usually manifests in certain quirky elements--people knowing their future/past but not the past/future which shaped them (I'm thinking maybe of THE ARROW OF TIME here, which I only read of in reviews, but the hero has these mysterious scars and as he gets younger he ends up in a concentration camp where the scars are inflicted/removed), etc."

Actually, I think you mean TIME'S ARROW by Martin Amis. And it's a powerful book, well worth seeking out, not only for its time-lived-backwards execution (Tod Friendly is "born" at the end of his life and "dies" when he is born), but also the concentration camp tie-in, which still blows me away. (You think the Holocaust is horrible enough already, wait'll you experience it in reverse.)

Comic-book-writer Alan Moore's "The Reversible Man" explores similar terrain.

As for Gene Wolfe, "In Looking Glass Castle" is a shorter work of his where a character lives life backwards and thus remembers the future--clearly modeled here on Lewis Carroll's White Queen, who does the same. In this case, however, it's Daisy McKane, who, although she's naturally confused, remembers her own drowning.

I also believe there is some support for the notion that the Merlin characters in CASTLEVIEW--Mercedes and her mother--may be experiencing life backwards.

Robert Borski