

Memory And Back Identity In The Michael Ondaatje's War Light

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Abstract:

Memory schemata are a concrete operation in identity formation. Memory activity is based on the basic contrast between the past and the present. Sense of nostalgia, Displacement, loss of identity, dilemma, connecting roots of the identity formation. Connected with roots overpour the burden of individual identity. Everybody carries the scars, injustices, and wounds of the past with them as they remain in their memories and the places they formerly owned. Michael Ondaatje's War Light (2018) offers to understand how characters and their identities are created with the aid of memory. The object of this paper is how memory i.e., back identity plays a remarkable role in shaping identity. The approach will use postcolonial ideas to analyze the works of my author.

Keywords: Memory, Nostalgia, back identity, psychological trauma, Time and space.

Introduction

The oscillation between past and present brings more fluidity to identity. Connected with roots overpour the burden of individual identity. Ondaatje's personal accountability of experience and memories provides an insightful understanding of several challenges the geographical, transcultural, and ideological world faces to establish identity. Re-remembering is a process of temporary reconstruction that embeds the past and present selves together, whereas "remembering the self" is a process that restores Aboriginal integrity. In This paper, through the work of Ondaatje's *War light* try to exhibit, not the dispersal of self into various kind, but instead transformation or unity among various self by taking back through memory. Ondaatje's character weaved dismantled memories together and shaped his true identity.

WAR LIGHT.

Nathaniel's hunt for his parents sets the tone for War Light. When his father took a new position in Singapore as head of marketing for Unilever Asia, his parents left him and his 16-year-old sister Rachel after the 1945 war. Next is their mother who said going to join her husband. But ambiguity has created when Rachel finds her mother's well-planned luggage in the cellar. The sibling's distress began when they left to enter the British boarding schools, that's been increased after being left in the care of a guest, called 'The Moth.'

His mother's unsent trunk and his mother's glimpses at the dancing club arouse questions about Rose, his mother's whereabouts. Taking an archivist position in the British Intelligence opened vistas to explore his mother's identity, embedded with his self-identity. Till the day he thought about his understanding of his parents and his mother 'scared childhood is not true as it is visible. The novel's fundamental theme is the dangers and costs of conflict, and it draws distinctions between ignorance and identity conception, memory and distortion, childhood and adulthood, and war and peace.

The setting of the story changes to 1959 in the second half of the book. Now 28 years old, Nathaniel purchases a home in Suffolk, the county where his mother Rose Williams, alias Viola, grew up. Nathaniel examines secret service papers and dossiers while working at the British Foreign Office to piece together his mother's participation in covert activities during the war. She is linked to seemingly unrelated incidents like a bombing in Jerusalem, a massacre in Yugoslavia, and a covert operation in Italy. For instance, we learn that Marsh Felon, the thatcher's kid who fell from Rose's childhood home's roof in the opening section of the book, never truly left her life. After his mother's passing, Nathaniel, who is determined to learn the details of his family's breakdown, discovers hidden evidence.

Michael Ondaatje

Ondaatje is fascinated by memory archives and archaeology. As a writer, Ondaatje is interested in connecting an individual's identity with the wider world of the past with a lot of memory. Almost all of his books start with a memorable image. The remainder of the narrative reads like a backstory. Ondaatje, 74, has lived and experienced a significant deal of what is included in his works. Ondaatje, who was born in Sri Lanka in 1943, was raised on a large family estate in Kegalle

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that belonged to his wealthy tea plantation paternal grandparents. Ondaatje moved to England in 1952, four years after his parents' divorce, along with his mother, sister, and brother. His father, Mervyn Ondaatje, drowned himself in alcohol back in Sri Lanka. Ondaatje relocated to Canada in 1962, where he has resided ever since.

Erik Erikson, A pioneer of Back Identity:

A pioneer of Back identity is the German developmental psychologist, Erik Erikson. Identity cohesiveness vs. role confusion, or the identity crisis, may happen during the stages of psychological development in teenagers, according to Erikson. At this time, a person's sexual maturity, physical and mental development, and ability to impart information about themselves and their personalities to others all underwent significant changes.

Atkinson, who proposed the multi-store model along with Richard Shiffrin, 1968 writes "Traumatic memory is a kind of past in the present that informs the future.'

Each person's character and behaviour at any one point carves our bodily and mind, thus operating through memories, thoughts, feelings, and emotions of people forgotten long back.

This memory affected the equilibrium and created trauma between Rachel and Nathaniel. Michael Ondaatje explores the lives of two teenagers, Nathaniel and Rachel, as well as a variety of unexpected characters that unwittingly impact the teens' lives in his book *War Light*. Like memory itself, the story is simultaneously light and gloomy.

Nathaniel views his past as being made up of a variety of pieces, and he continues getting drawn into new ones. Their parent's abrupt vanish create chaos in their mind and arouse many questions only with unanswered. "If she's not there, is he not there too?" "Where is my father?" (pg. 27&28) There were drastic changes in their routine and somewhere clashes in getting in to adjust to the new life and its standard. Nathaniel and Rachel went without food as Moth stole food from the street, unable to cook, which is not their cup of tea. Due to a lack of continuous monitoring of his educational progress, replaced family life and new attendees and comer to meet their caretakers new sort of curious pleasure of female company was in Nathaniel.

Nathaniel is far better at managing this trauma rather than Rachel. She connected her equilibrium, stirred up her external relationship with the outer world, and unseen her inner core demands. The uncertainty of her physical environment, which was not used to her and the absence of her parents, and the thronged of new people into their personal space discarded her interpretation of circumstances. So, she experiences epilepsy and grand mal seizures, due to feelings of loneliness and insecurity.

Every stage in Erikson's theory entails a conflict that the person must deal with and that may or may not be successfully resolved. For instance, he named the first stage "Trust vs. Mistrust." When newborn care is provided with excellence, the kid learns to trust that her needs will be met by the outside world. If not, trust issues will persist during the following stages of development.

Memories that are tied to time and place are a kind of psychic anchor. This often reminds us of what we were once and where did we from and the environment which was nurtured when the family subtleties were strained. Though we travelled for a long, life journey never spares these memories. These childhood memories are a temporal progression of the self. The identity of Nathaniel's mother continues to be a mystery. He believed that he had vanished and that his youth had also been lost in his mother's anonymous and buried history. Marsh Felon, an enigmatic childhood friend whom Rose had both during and after World War II, is still a mystery to Nathaniel. When Nathaniel is at White Paint and his mother is sleeping on her small, sheet-less bed, he remembers the tale she talked about the boy who lived on the family home's roof, which helps him piece together the truth. Memory, the cornerstone of the mind, is fundamentally geographical since it is employed both to recall the past and function in the present.

He used the Archival method to find his mother's identity of his and his self-identity through memory and many traces, like visiting his mother's place and seeing old photos. There is a strong relationship between memory, time, and space. So, memory is a source of power in constituting the self. Memory whether intentional recollection of the past or unintentional acts as art in picturing one undisclosed identity.

"To remember is ... not simply to restore a forgotten link or moment of experience, nor is it unproblematically to repossess or re-enact what has been lost" (Nicholls 1996)

This sort of displacement of socio-cultural, socio-economical living conditions affected adolescents' stimuli. Even though childhood is regarded as the most precious time in a person's life, it might be difficult for the mind to grasp this impersonal period. By bringing up the memories connecting this historical period to the places people have lived, the human brain tends to replicate it. The internally and externally displaced personalities are exposed to psychological distress which causes the development of adverse personalities.

Lacan stated that the memories and images generated from the violence of repudiation enter into, as he describes a reciprocal and a 'symbolic opposition to the subject' (Lacan 1977, p.217).

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Thomas Reid, a pioneer of "the theory of ideas" stated, mental processes like perception and memory have mental states, such as ideas or impressions, as their immediate objects. In memory, the mind is not focused on a concept from a previous experience or on an idea from a previous experience. Instead, we think back on previously experienced events.

According to Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory of personality development, from conception to death, every human being goes through a number of distinct and qualitatively different stages. He asserts that the stages as well as ages have transitioned from one stage to the next.

The siblings are upset that they must leave their parents' care to enroll in British boarding schools, but they are even more upset that they must entrust their care to a very strange family acquaintance they have called "The Moth." Both brother and sister become obscure to each other, knowing nothing about what is happening in their life. She disappeared into the evenings and said nothing as he was silent about Agnes Street.

Moth, while asked them to develop self-sufficiency in life by earning for themselves. Thus, they work part-time small jobs to run themselves. While working in the restaurant on Agnes Street, he comes across a girl with whom he had a sexual relationship. "...about to enter a borderless terrain between adolescence and adulthood." (Pg-65)

Between the ages of 12 and 19, according to Erikson, the queries "Who am I? " "What are my values? " and "What is my identity?" arise. Erikson asserts that now is also the time to choose one's values, comprehend one's views, and find one's "self." If a child's ideals are forced upon them rather than those that they independently choose, they do not internalize them and later life lacks meaning. How are these figures chosen? Teenagers frequently imitate and preserve the values of their role models, claims Erikson. Individuating without resistance is necessary for a positive sense of self.

My reading, *The War Light* aims to comprehend how memories shape the personalities of its protagonists. As Erikson stated, Nathaniel in his childhood questioned himself about his parents, and it continued in his adulthood and teens. These all questions finally, with the help of his memory answered with his own identity.

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