

MEMORY'S DUAL DANCE: TRACING WORDSWORTH'S DOUBLE AWARENESS IN SHAFAK'S MEMORY NARRATIVE

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of memory and time as a literary device in Elif Shafak's novel, "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World". This study looks at the different aspects of Shafak's work and how the novelist employs memory as a useful technique to evoke her power of imagination evolving in timeless setting. The primary source of data for this study is the novel "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World" by Elif Shafak (2019). Additionally, the data has been collected from secondary sources as indicated in the references section. This research utilizes a qualitative content analysis approach to investigate Shafak's literary work. The content analysis method is a systematic research approach used to analyze and draw inferences from textual data. "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World" serves as demonstration to the author's adeptness in storytelling, as it intricately crafts a narrative that encompasses the ephemeral minutes immediately following the demise of its central character, Leila. As the protagonist's life gradually diminishes, the story delves into a profound examination of her recollections, displaying memory on play, with each passing moment unveiling a complex tapestry of past events that have influenced her being. This study

Keyword: Memory, time, imagination, literary work, Elif Shafak

Introduction

"Elif Shafak speaks like she writes — uttering the most beautiful and insightful sentences with utmost ease"(Lounge,2022). Within the domain of modern literature, there is a limited number of authors who possess the adeptness to skillfully navigate the complex interplay of memory and imagination opening multiple dimensions in time, and Elif Shafak is undoubtedly one of them. Elif Shafak, a highly acclaimed writer, is a 49-year-old author who was born in France, raised in Turkey, and relocated to England over ten years ago.

Shafak frequently explores themes that surpass geographical and symbolic boundaries in her literary works. Her narratives delve profoundly into the intricacies of the human mind and the narratives that influence its formation.

The primary objective of this study is to delve into the intricate interplay of memory and imagination within the timeless space of Shafak's novel, examining how they collaboratively shape individual identity while reflecting broader cultural narratives. Moreover, it seeks a connection between William Wordsworth's "dual awareness" and Shafak's underlying theme of memory and. The concept of memory has captivated both authors and scholars in the realm of literature, providing insights into the complexities of the human mind, the progression of time, and the intricate relationship between individual and shared pasts. William Wordsworth, a prominent figure in the realm of Romantic literature, is credited with the introduction of the notion of "double awareness," which entails the ability to perceive and engage with both the past and the present simultaneously (Günes, 2003) The concept of duality, originating from the Romantic era, exhibits parallels in present-day literature, indicating its lasting significance.

The novel "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World" by Elif Shafak offers a captivating framework for examining this notion within a contemporary setting. Situated within the historical and culturally diverse metropolis of Istanbul, the novel explores the profound recollections of its protagonist, Leila, during the latter stages of her existence. The narrative structure employed in this specific context of 10 minutes and 38 seconds, wherein memories encompass an entire lifetime yet are perceived inside a transitory moment, evokes a profound connection to Wordsworth's concept of "double awareness."

Nevertheless, despite the existence of a substantial body of scholarly work on Wordsworth's pursuit of memory, there is a dearth of research that establishes a connection between his conceptual framework and modern literature, particularly non-Western literary works. This gap provides an opportunity to investigate the ways in which universal themes of memory are expressed in various cultural and historical contexts. To the author's best knowledge, this aspect of Shafak's work has not been fully investigated to date. This present study seeks to establish a connection between the memory concepts of Wordsworth and the tale of Shafak, creating a bridge between Romantic and current literature as well as Western and Eastern narratives. In doing so, the study intends to emphasize the universal nature of memory and its intricate relationship with the passage of time. This rationale establishes the significance of the study, identifies a research gap in the current literature, and presents a coherent argument for investigating the relationship between Wordsworth and Shafak.

Literature review

Nominated as a finalist for the prestigious 2019 Man Booker Prize, Shafak's remarkable and imaginative novel commences with the demise of its central character, afterwards progressing in its narrative trajectory (Publishers Weekly, 2019). The lifeless body of a sex worker named "Tequila Leila" in Istanbul is tragically terminated, and afterwards disposed of in a waste container. Despite the cessation of cardiac activity, the cerebral processes of the individual persist for a duration of 10 minutes and 38 seconds and 11 minutes, during which she experiences a resurgence of vivid recollections. Leila, it has been discovered, was raised in a small Turkish village, where she experienced early separation from her mother. Leila, a teenager who had experienced sexual abuse perpetrated by her uncle and faced the distressing prospect of an arranged marriage, made the decision to go to Istanbul. In this new environment, she was forced to engage in the sex trade as it presented the only viable employment opportunity available to her. She exhibits a vibrant persona, and her experiences, particularly within the context of Istanbul, do not solely encompass a consistently gloomy atmosphere. The tale commences with a notable development as Leila's five closest companions, who share her status as social outcasts and whose backgrounds are extensively depicted in the literary work, make the collective decision to retrieve her deceased remains from the "Cemetery of the Companionless," where they were inconsiderately interred. Shafak's work offers a very detailed and intricate depiction of a female protagonist navigating challenging conditions, while also exploring the complex urban environment in which she resides. The novel unveils the bitter realities of life through the unsurpassed interplay of memory.

Theoretical Framework

A comprehensive overview throughout history demonstrates that literature has served as a platform through which the faculties of memory and imagination have become intricately

connected. Authors have extensively explored the intricate workings of human consciousness, particularly in relation to the interplay between memories and the imagination. This exploration may be observed in notable literary works such as Proust's "In Search of Lost Time" and Woolf's "A Sketch of the Past" (Deefholts, 2015) and "Mrs. Dalloway" (Güneş, 2003) and William Wordsworth's "Daffodills". In Wordsworth's poetic works such as "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," the process of recollecting a meadow adorned with daffodils transcends mere nostalgic reflection. The poet's interaction with the present is characterized by active involvement, when the recollection of the flowers serves to modify their prevailing emotional state, offering comfort and elation. The act of engaging with both the recollection of past events and the accompanying emotional resonance in the present exemplifies Wordsworth's concept of "double awareness."

The present study contends that William Wordsworth's "double awareness" of memory can be applicable in Shafak's work. The notion of "double awareness" implies a multidimensional perspective on self and perception in existence. Characters simultaneously inhabit both the past and the present, as they retain their prior experiences while existing in the present moment. Within the genre of romantic poetry, William Wordsworth frequently probed the notion of memory's dual nature. Although he did not expressly assign a specific term to this phenomenon, it can be understood as a form of "double awareness." The phenomenon under consideration involves the concurrent perception of historical events and contemporary occurrences, when memories transcend mere passive recalls and instead have active influence, enhancing the present moment. The presence of this dichotomy is particularly conspicuous within Shafak's tale, as the central character, Leila, traverses the transitional realm that lies between existence and mortality.

The present study aims to establish a connection between the works of Wordsworth and Shafak, spanning different time periods and cultural contexts. By doing so, it seeks to demonstrate the universal nature of memory as an ongoing theme in their respective literary works. Both authors, despite the differences in their respective time and cultural contexts, have a common perspective that memories are not simply passive recollections. Active forces play a significant role in determining our current experiences, emotions, and identities. Memories, regardless of their antiquity or freshness, serve as a stabilizing force, connecting us to our sense of ourselves and providing comfort, introspection, and a perception of coherence.

Methodology

The present study uses a qualitative content analysis methodology to examine Elif Shafak's work entitled "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in this Strange World." The content analysis method is a rigorous research approach employed to systematically assess and derive meaningful insights from textual material.

Discussion

The present study fills the existing gap by exploring the use of memory as a literary device to expand the narrative in time and space. In addition, the study seeks to analyze the role of memory in William Wordsworth and Elif Shafak.

Shafak makes time both linear and cyclical in "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World" by employing the temporal fluidity of memory. Leila's memoirs encompass the entirety of her lifespan; however, they are perceived during the ephemeral moments subsequent to her murder.

This is reminiscent of the poems of Wordsworth, in which he frequently contemplates childhood or previous encounters through the lens of adulthood, allowing the past to mold and impact the present. Referring to the novel, Shafak beautifully describes the collection of memories in the protagonist's mind, "Inside the closet of her mind, there were many compartments, filled with shelves, boxes, and suitcases. Some were ancient and dusty; others new and shiny."

The work offers a profound metaphorical depiction of memory and the intricacies of the human psyche. The concept of the "closet of her mind" functions as a metaphorical representation of the cognitive repository where memories are stored. The imagery presented evokes parallels to the concepts of the "cabinet of curiosities" or "memory palace," wherein the cognitive faculties are metaphorically represented as an organized area housing accumulated experience.

The diverse storage mechanisms exemplify the various approaches employed in the retention of memories. Certain memories can be compartmentalized, intentionally kept separate from other memories, potentially as an outcome of experiencing trauma or owing to their lack of alignment with our present identity. Some individuals are set aside, akin to books that can be reviewed at a later time. Boxes might potentially symbolize memories that are carefully contained and preserved, potentially considering their emotional significance or sensitivity. Suitcases possess the potential to serve as symbolic representations of memories associated with various voyages, transitions, or consequential life changes.

This juxtaposition highlights the transient quality of memories. Memories that are characterized as "ancient and dusty" refer to recollections originating from a remote period in the past, maybe exhibiting signs of fading or distortion due to the passage of time. These recollections could perhaps stem from one's formative years or early life encounters. In contrast, memories that are described as "new and shiny" are defined by their recent occurrence, as well as their enduring freshness and vividness. The aforementioned duality exemplifies the cognitive capacity of the human mind to navigate temporal dimensions, seamlessly transitioning between remote historical periods and the current now.

The statement can be linked to William Wordsworth's notion of "dual awareness" in the realm of memory. The coexistence of memories classified as both "ancient and dusty" and "new and shiny" within Leila's memory reflects a parallel to Wordsworth's experience of simultaneously engaging with the past and the present. Similar to how Wordsworth's contemplations on previous encounters are influenced by his current feelings and perspectives, Leila's recollections, encompassing both past and recent experiences, exist simultaneously and mutually influence one another, thereby molding her present state of awareness and sense of self. Shafak's literary work presents a profound and intricate examination of memory, highlighting its organized yet malleable characteristics. The complex visual representations evoke a profound connection with Wordsworth's conceptualizations of memory, so emphasizing the widespread and enduring nature of these ideas.

This metaphorical representation of Leila's mind encapsulates the vastness and intricacy of her memories. Like Wordsworth, she possesses an awareness of both the distant and recent past, and these memories coalesce to form her present consciousness.

Interestingly, Wordsworth and Shafak amazingly display the emotional resonance of memory. For Wordsworth, memories have a significance beyond mere occurrences, as they embrace

emotional encounters. Likewise, Leila's recollections exhibit profound emotional depth, with each memory bearing its own distinct emotional significance, including feelings of happiness, sadness, affection, or distress. Importantly, in literature, memories including those that evoke both positive and negative emotions, hold greater value than a complete absence of any recollection. This phenomenon aligns with Wordsworth's notion that memories possess inherent significance in the present, irrespective of their emotional character. The utilization of such artefacts establishes a link to character's previous iterations, so anchoring them in their individual and collective sense of self.

Wordsworth embraces memories not just events but emotional experiences. He frequently explores the emotional terrain of his recollections, placing a particular value on the sensory perceptions, emotional states, and affective responses linked to previous encounters. Similarly, Leila's memories are deeply emotional. Each memory she revisits is not just an event, each one carrying its own weight of joy, sorrow, love, or pain. For instance, "Memories, even bittersweet ones, are better than nothing." This sentiment echoes Wordsworth's idea that memories, regardless of their emotional nature, have a value in the present. They provide a connection to our past selves, grounding us in our identities. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of memories, including those that may trigger sorrow or remorse. The concept of "bittersweet" encapsulates the inherent dichotomy inside memories, wherein they possess the capacity to evoke both distress and fondness. The concept being presented posits that memories, despite being linked to distress or sadness, possess inherent worth for their capability to serve as testimony of a lived encounter and a link to a former version of oneself.

In short, both Wordsworth and Shafak underscore the profound emotional significance of memories and their fundamental value for forming readers' sense of self and establishing a connection to personal history. Memories are not solely characterized by passive recollections but rather possess an active nature that influences our current emotions, perceptions, and self-perception.

Critics generally acknowledge that vastness in the landscape of memory is employed both in Wordsworth and Shafak. For instance, Wordsworth commonly utilized natural landscapes as symbolic manifestations of memory. Similarly, Shafak exploits the urban setting of Istanbul as a dynamic landscape of shared recollection. The metropolitan setting, with its complex historical characteristics, might be seen as a metaphorical depiction of Leila's cognitive landscape, where personal memories and collective experiences are intertwined. The portrayal of Istanbul in the story exemplifies the dichotomy of memory, illustrating its dual nature as both palpable and illusive. In a manner reminiscent of the landscapes portrayed by Wordsworth, the city of Istanbul functions as a spatial realm in which both tangible and intangible components converge.

Moreover, Leila's mind is reflected in the historical layers of Istanbul with a beautiful mergence of personal memories with collective ones. As is clear from this statement, "Istanbul was an illusion. A magician's trick gone wrong." The city's portrayal as both

The depiction of Istanbul in the novel reflects the dual nature of memory, presenting it as both tangible and illusive. Similar to the landscapes depicted by Wordsworth, Istanbul serves as a spatial entity whereby both the physical and emotional dimensions coalesce.

Shafak's "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World" illustrates a parallel within the protagonist Leila's stream of consciousness as she approaches death and the concept of "double awareness" observed in William Wordsworth's works. As she recalls events from her past, they are not distant or detached memories. They are vividly experienced in her present, shaping her understanding of her life, her identity, and her place in the world. The aforementioned quotation underscores the interrelated nature of memories, as each individual memory acts as a catalyst for subsequent memories, creating a chain reaction. Every individual memory, firmly grounded in a particular instance from her personal history, has an impact and subsequently paves the way for the subsequent recollection, engendering an integrated and interlinked narrative that she actively encounters in the present moment.

In short, the concept of "double awareness" has a profound connection to the transformational influence of memory, as explored by both Wordsworth and Shafak. Memories are not merely passive recollections, but rather active engagements that serve as a bridge between the past and the present. The process of recollecting, whether exemplified by Wordsworth's appreciation of nature's aesthetic appeal or Leila's navigation of her personal trajectory, serves as a witness to the persistent and transformational influence of memory. From this perspective, the two authors shed light on the significant influence of memories on our current emotions, perceptions, and identities, underscoring the enduring interplay between the past and the present.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to explore the complex interplay of memory, as it navigates between the worlds of the past and the present, continues to be a perennial subject of investigation in literature of the world no matter what language it speaks. William Wordsworth, renowned for his profound Romantic sensibility, was instrumental in introducing the concept of "double awareness" to the global audience. This concept entails the ability to engage with both the past and the present simultaneously. The concept of duality, which has its origins in the Romantic era, is evident in the modern narrative of Elif Shafak's novel "10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World." In her work, Shafak skillfully portrays a tragic narrative centered around the persona of Leila, thereby creating a vivid depiction of many memories. Each of these memories is defined by a strong emotional resonance, serving as a reflection of the diverse range of human experiences, encompassing both moments of happiness and sadness, as well as instances of love and suffering.

Within a dynamic and swiftly evolving global landscape, the current moment frequently appears transient. In that context the role of memory within the realm of literature functions as a poignant acknowledgment of the ongoing and fundamental human desire to establish connections, engage in introspection, and seek significance. The concept of "double awareness" in Wordsworth's work and the complex interplay of memory narrative in Shafak's writing aim to emphasize a universal and enduring search for identity, prompting readers from various time periods and cultural backgrounds to reflect, recollect, and discover their own place within the complicated fabric of their memories.

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