



Psychology Of Memory In War: A Study Of David Diop's At Night All Blood Is Black

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ABSTRACT

Human Brain has the high complex mechanism which can store and retrieve memories. Memory studies helped us to understand the way it process. Long-term memory has the capacity for limitless storage to store the past and present events with emotions it carried along. Reading the novel of David Diop's "At Night All Blood is Black", Alfa the protagonist communicated his lifenarrative which contained memories, emotions and the psychological changes in his 'self'. He was a Senegalese soldier at the war zone and the sudden unexpected demise of his soul bother evoked his past experience. This paper projects the sense of attachment with his past and the people in specific took an emotional upheaval connected with his memory. How the change happened in his 'self' slowly took over his mentality and behavior due to the death at the war zone discussed here. Key factors like visual mnemonic technique, flashbacks, episodic memory were implied in the article to understand a person who project his self in comparison to his past and present. Violence and death were the combination of war. Through visual mnemonic, we can observe the person seeking an outlet to express his thoughts and emotions and how he finally embraced the realization through revealing the truth which helped him to cleanse his 'self'.

Key Words : Memories, psychology, long-term, episodic, emotions, war, death, visual mnemonic, flashback,life narrative.

Introduction:

David Diop was a significant French- Senegalese novelist who was born in 1966 in Paris. He belonged to the 21st contemporary period. His Second French novel "*Frère d'âme*" got published in 2018. Later In 2020, this novel got translated from French to English titled as "At Night All Blood is Black" which was set up in the period of world war-I. This work is a mix of real historical background with added fiction. Diop tried to explain situations experienced by Senegalsoldiers and the war zone mentality explicitly by shadowing that in the storyline.

The study on human memory and the way those recollected memories processed were existed from decades before during the era of Aristotle. Many philosophers, scientists and psychologists were working on the memories study theory and came up with their hypothesis. Memory of human beings can be acquired through their own experience in life. Every individual's memory of their childhood experience and life time unforgettable circumstances got recorded at the back of their minds.

Memory studies dealt with the mental life of humans which lied on their memory lane. Memory and Recollection were the key factors which affect the psychology of human life. The memory acted as a bridge to connect the past and present of every individual. The sequence of events or certain situations created a huge impact in person's life. The memories often recalled by an individual made those memories to be stagnated in their minds. Atkinson-shiffrin multi-store memory model served as a beginning model of psychological memory theory. The last stage of the model called as Long-term memory taken into an account of analyzing this novel. The memory got three stages which were encoding, storage and retrieval. First stage of memory

encoding was grasping initial information in brain.

Humans gather memories through senses, but not all the memories got stamped. Memories accumulated throughout their experience with remembering small detail like remembering names and faces. Later it gradually developed by specific situation which created a greater impact got stored for future. Examples like certain words and phrases, gestures, actions and habits. The next stage of memory storage attained when the extra information got received based on initial details for a time period. The final stage is retrieval of memory which can be recalled at times needed. The Long-term memory has the higher level capacity of withholding past memories which can also help to be recalled even after long time. Also the existing memory can be restored for a long time by repeatedly remembering when the visual cues related to the events occurred from the past.

Explaining the experiment proceeded to long-term memory by Henry Gustav Molaison who introduced the divisions under Long-term memory. Particularly on Explicit memory which gives an affirmative powerful retention and the process of memory recollection during conscious state of mind. Extending to that an episodic type of memory often connected to an individual's personal life experienced moments. This episodic memory is elucidated by the psychologist named Endel Tulving. The verbal communications like open talk of a person who remembered the past happenings caused due to constant thought processing. But this memory needed a constant practice of retrieving the past memories occasionally to keep that refreshed. The thought processions of memory allow the person to enhance their vision of revisiting their past which made them feel real. The chosen life episodes of memory rely on their cerebral cortex part of brain.

Investigating through psychological perspective, Narrative memories hold the connection with timeline and history behind it. Emotions play an important role in memory. The term "Flash backs" denoted the recurring memory which often reemerged through intense force. The intense force were bottled emotions which mostly coordinated with traumatic days or dark-past of an individual. Flash backs cannot be retrieved as a complete memory. The Brain chiefly paid attention to unpleasant memories which got stored through negative impacts. The war zone mentality implied on this novel which got showcased by the main character. He got exposed to the tragedy at regular basis and the death of his closed one ended up collapsing his mental stability. The mental torture went through by the soldiers was depicted and the complex demonic change happened inside main character due to emotional baggage spiked up to savagery.

The visual based mnemonic technique of drawing or sketching anything related to the past events which got lingered in an individual memories symbolize their part of memory with a hidden meaning behind. Those visual clues projected a person's psychological behavior and help to study in-depth of their nature and identity. More than verbal evidence visual clues hold power in memory.

This paper discusses about the story of a soldier's emotional upheaval which got triggered by death of his close buddy at the war zone. Then the changes happened in 'self' which rekindled the past memories affecting him in psychological way. Aided with visual mnemonic the sketches made by him talked about the memories he was conveying with underlying meaning to it.

In a nutshell, The Protagonist Alfa Ndiaye, a Senegal soldier who was deeply invested in familial bond, friendship, brotherhood and morality till he watched his soul brother Mademba state of agonizing death caused by an enemy which turned him into an assassin waiting to quench his blood thirst revenge. Alfa and Mademba shared an inseparable bond from their childhood and participated together for events. As Mademba decided to join French army to fight against the Germans, Alfa too followed him as shield. But the death of his soul brother brought out the past memories like opening the dam full of water which washed him with guilt and raised the vengeance. This made him blinded with rage resulted with seven severed arms. After his vengeful deed got noticed by the higher official, he was sent to military campus for psychiatric therapy to retain his self. There he was tested by the doctor. He sketched three drawings reflecting his both past and present memories which got evaluated by the doctor to understand his state of mind. The war zone represented the ground by denoting life or death fate. The psychological shift happened due sudden loss of a supporting brother and his guilt of being irresponsible by leaving his more than brother unguarded infuriated him. And finally he found solace by revelation of truth along with memories he kept within. "By the grace of God....if you are my brother, Alfa...I'm begging you...slit my throat!" (At Night All Blood is Black, pg.no. 5)

The Quoted line denoted the final moment of Mademba begging to end his misery by Alfa. This line kept resonated in Alfa ear which turned him into a monster seeking revenge for his soul brother. The beginning of the story started with Alfa mourning near Mademba dead body after witnessing the horrendous sight of blood, flesh and organs got spew out. Alfa got to spot the breath running out of Mademba system as he was begging to be killed, because of slow agonizing moment of death. The half dying soul of mademba reached Alfa hands, as his disfigured body caused by the enemy spilled out everywhere.

Alfa mind got imprinted with the extreme emotions which was majorly consists of his missing mother Penndo Ba, his father Bassirou Coumba Ndiaye's courage, Mademba became his soul brother by making him as his family member, his childhood crush, scouted around the village and involved in hand fights to prove his

masculinity. He remembered his father's act of speech and being a cultured man. His explicit memory played a huge part of recalling past in his conscious state of mind. Till the present time his recollected past surfaced in his brain which projected his own experience and hurdles he crossed.

The specific episodes of his life revoked his psychology. The habits, behavior and the traditional values which were followed by him as he looked up his father got vanished in thin air. The sudden death of his soul buddy made him to hate his self for not obeying his brothers last beg. Also the guilt with regret grew larger as he recalled his past. Later, the regret turned into vengeance by making him as a spirit of soul collector.

Alfa narrated his life events and the emotions he felt during the war zone. The verbal statements uttered by him carried out the refreshed memories of his past. The final strike of his mental health collapsed only after death of Mademba. Sooner the moment evoked his inner demons through the retrieval of his shared memories with Mademba rushed as the mix of down poured emotions. The change his 'self' turned the upside down of his morality and war ethics. He also got to watch the way captain commanded them to shoot enemies at the war zone which made him to act on command alone. This brought the situation of his dilemma during his soul brother's dying state of begging mercy to be killed.

The Death of Mademba alarmed the final strike in Alfa mind. His repressed memories of their childhood days, promises to be a pillar for each other, welcomed into mademba household after his loss of mother, the brotherhood they shared and beyond friendship moments recollected as fragments which was stored in his Long-term memory. All the encoded memory stored in him made a robust outcome creating a demon. The death triggered his past memories through negative impact.

The Flashbacks of Alfa and Mademba waited for Alfa's mother near the hills with never ending hope during their youth days. Mademba eyes gave out glint of envy and also proud of his soul brother Alfa's Manliness, the memory of Mademba got vigorously trained by Alfa to enter military force. The little happiness and teasing jokes between them flashed in front of his eyes. The war zone mentality never showed a ray of sunshine but the misery of death at dusk. Living under the wind of crisis, the war zone prone to increase the outburst of anger, irritation of bullet sounds, internal and external changes occurred in an individual. The war ethics to kill the opponent got changed due to the inside politics of higher officials, the soldiers who were rebelling to stop the brutality and tired of massacre got threatened and sent as sacrifice to enemy's land at night. There they were shot at the sight unknown to anyone of trench mates. The soldiers suffered with random bullets to fight every day at domineering captain Armand's voice.

Alfa Turned into a savage for hunting down the evil blue eyed enemy mentioned by mademba became his goal. He collected the soul of possible enemies before torturing them and collected their severed arms as a token of remembrance. Thus, it became a never ended butchery with seven severed arms. No man's land became his territory. The Arms he brought back to the trench once were celebrated by the comrades who thought that were belonged to Germans. As time went on fear crushed the comrades due the behavior of Alfa. The violent storm of war not only shook enemies but also the inside circle. Alfa lost his stability as he was trying to make amends for his soul brother Mademba.

Captain Armand who was appreciating the brave deed of Alfa investigated his recent behavior. The seven severed hands were searched inside the campsite to prove the brutal nature of Alfa. But they were hidden out perfectly by Alfa under the kitchen smoke stack. Baffled captain gave rest time for Alfa from war zone. He got sent to the military psychiatric under the observation of Doctor François. The visual mnemonic technique imparted here as a way of inner self expression. Alfa got chances to recall the important events he went through his which had greater impact in his life.

Alfa was given a paper and pencil to express his feelings and emotions through it. He got the art of sketching thus he drew a lively picture of his Fula mother named Penndo Ba's face. She got a strong personality as in the image. He had stored her inside his mind for a long time which can be proved through the details in her face. The encoded memory had a negative impact because of his missing mother who went in search for her father and brother from nomads of Yoruba community. Her absence made the family broken, his father submerged into sadness and that moment caused Alfa to lose hope and support.

The next sketching was the face of Mademba who was his soul brother, second self also his close friend. The memory rekindled when the hands of Mademba took Alfa to his mother by declaring him as his brother who was not by blood but soul. The welcoming gesture of the family intrigued him, when he failed to save his soul brother from miserable death caused by evil blue-eyed enemy. The same hand which yielded the friendship and brotherhood, later changed as a call for immediate death. Mademba was begging for honorable death though scraped guts lying out of body. The native place Gandiol was their home. Alfa was physically stubborn whereas Mademba was mentally stubborn. Alfa followed the traditional masculine lifestyle but mademba followed the French language and schools. Both got each other back thus they ended up joining in military

together.

The last sketching was about the seven severed hands, he butchered when the enemies were alive. The details of hands can be distinguished by their shades, hair and sizes. This shook doctor to the core. As he drew these he got an outlet to pour his furiousness. It gave him to find peace after the revelation. He gathered the half rotten seven severed hands for a proper burial at no man's land the night. The same night he heard the voices of cries while he slaughtered the blue eyed men. He cleaned himself with water after leaving the no man's land as he gained his self with emotions calm. He sought his internal and external crisis through image confessions.

Through this paper, an individual can acquire their memories from their early days and often recollect those if got provoked. The memories always play a huge part with psychology. Thus, memory and recollection connected the past and present by giving pathway for future. Alfa's dark past and unexpected bitter moments collapsed his inner psyche but he got an outlet to revive his self. Psychological imbalance caused by not only by an individual but also his from surroundings like war, violence, grotesque death.

Concluding the statement that Long-term memory in psychology withhold the specific past memories by retrieving them occasionally, without memory no human can define his self. Episodic memory talks about the person's history and what he goes through to his become his present self. Through memories only we can evaluate our past and present changes in life and people we lived with. Memories shape an individual's character. Writers employ Memory to shape a character along with emotional events in life narrative.

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