



HUMAN TERRITORIALITY AS A SPATIAL CONTROL STRATEGY IN MICHAEL ONDAATJE'S *WARLIGHT*

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ABSTRACT

Human Territoriality is the act of delimiting and controlling an area of space, a territory in order to control place and things. The present study discusses Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight*, paying particular attention to territoriality which is used by the characters as a controlling strategy. Space assets play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of great power strategies across the globe. They act as a force multiplier that can enhance territorial power and prestige. This article analyzes the role of space in the implementation of power. Territorial security is a prerequisite for allowing regular people and legal goods to travel within and across national boundaries with some degree of freedom, while preventing the free movement of illicit items and people who pose security risks. Here, Territorial security is found to be important after encountering a war with relevance to the novel.

KEYWORDS: Human Territoriality, Space, War, Territorial Security

In Humanities and Social Sciences, the increasing trend of spatialisation in numerous disciplines like archaeology, art history, literary studies, sociology and anthropology since the 1990s is caused by the re-consideration of space as an equally vital phenomenon as time in which the constitution of social life is concerned. Such change in thought of social and human scientists is termed as “spatialturn”.

This “spatial turn” has rendered geo-humanities knowledge a key component in the concept and practice of social sciences and humanities. Geo-humanities is an interesting and dynamic domain today benefiting from the rapidly increasing interaction between the disciplines of geography, social sciences and humanities and is repeatedly spurred on by effective challenges from the developments in digital technologies. Geo- humanities focus on the role of space and place in a range of humanities disciplines.

TERRITORIALITY:

The ‘spatial turn’ of the 1990s brought space to the centre of attention. Spatiality is considered as vital as time in the construction of knowledge. Whereas the abstract idea of space focuses on the social construction of spatiality, the terminology of territory refers to a defined area controlled by people in order to set up a certain social order and delimit it from the outside. In human geography, territoriality is defined as ‘a spatial approach to change, influence or to manipulate people and resources by asserting control over a geographic area’ or simply using ‘territory for social, political, and economic ends’. A more expansionist understanding sees in territoriality the ‘proclivity of a nation to assert territory’. Generally, territorially defined claims of authority are termed as territoriality.

The production of territories and territoriality can be seen as devices that have a tendency to conceptualize power so that it seems to reside within the territory itself rather than in those who control it. Thereby attention is diverted away from the principles, power relationships and processes strengthening the conservation of territories and their boundaries. Territorial thinking, the production of territories, and the employment of territorial strategies are tied up with resisting the imposition of power or with maintaining power by a dominant group. Territorial behaviours can consolidate and strengthen exclusionary practises, but they can also be challenged in a similar way.

OBJECTIVES

The present research work is intended to carry out with specific aims and objectives as given and listed below:

- 1) To comprehend the role of space in the implementation of power
- 2) To analyze the importance of territorial security after encountering a war
- 3) To trace human territoriality in Michael Ondaatje’s *Warlight*

The area selected for the study is Geo-Humanities. It is a major interdisciplinary field which cultivate links between geographers, arts and humanities practitioners, and the creative, cultural and heritage sectors. The recognition of Geo-Humanities has been driven by recent developments in theory (the ‘spatial’ and ‘mobilities’ turns; the idea of Anthropocene), politics (the increasing urgency of environmental issues, or questions of territory, borders and displacement), data (the embrace of geo-coded data and Geographic Information Systems) and practice (in site specific performance art or the creative use of locative media).

TERRITORIALITY IN GEO-HUMANITIES

Human Territoriality is the act of delimiting and controlling an area of space, a territory in order to control place and things. It is a strategy that can be turned on and off, and the ‘Theory of Human Territoriality’ explains when and why the strategy is an advantage. Contemporary geographical contributions to the study of human territoriality have tended to align with wider arguments within the social sciences which suggest human behaviour is heavily conditioned by the economic, social, political, and cultural environment in which we exist. Two geographers who have contributed significantly to debates on human territoriality are Jean Gottmann and Robert Sack. Gottmann argues that territory, and the assertion of control over it, represents an expression of power. In his view, territory confers security through the control of defensible space while also providing opportunities through facilitating the economic organization of that space. This focus on opportunity and security indicates a political and economic foundation for territorial formations, which provide a more effective method of political organisation than systems of overlapping jurisdictions. Sack emphasizes the role of territoriality as a geographic and political strategy through which individuals or groups endeavour to “affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area.” In order to demonstrate how control of a geographic area can be used to establish or maintain power or, more importantly, to challenge the authority of a dominant group, he emphasises the instrumental nature of territoriality and draws attention to the ways in which territorial strategies may be used to accomplish specific goals. It means that territoriality is deeply embedded in social relations so that territories, far from being natural entities, are the result of social practices and processes and are produced under particular conditions in order to serve specific ends.

The present study discusses Michael Ondaatje’s *Warlight*, paying particular attention to territoriality which is used by the characters as a controlling strategy. Michael Ondaatje is a Canadian literary icon. His novels and poetry have earned international acclaim, and he was the first Canadian ever to win the Man Booker Prize for his wartime story. His new novel, *Warlight*, has been hailed as a masterpiece. The novel is set in England after the Second World War, it’s a compelling story of abandonment, family and memory, following a young man’s journey to discover the truth about his parents.

Sack's theory is inter-scalar, theorising territoriality in such a way that we can analyse the interlinked power of boundaries of different kinds. While Sack focuses primarily on the power exerted through the establishment of boundaries, the theory can be usefully applied to all kinds of boundaries.

ROLE OF SPACE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POWER

Space assets play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of great power strategies across the globe. They act as a force multiplier that can enhance territorial power and prestige.

Paul-Michel Foucault was a French philosopher, social theorist and literary critic. His views mainly focus on the interaction between knowledge and power and how society institutions employ them to exert social control. The issue of power is covered by Foucault in his seminal writings. Power is the capacity of one entity to direct another entity's behaviour. These connections seem to occur at all scales. Power is described by Foucault as "the diversity of force relations inherent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation" in *The History of Sexuality, Volume One*. The establishment of a sovereign authority who exercised complete control over the subjects through the open use of violence had played a significant role in the consolidation of power in mediaeval civilization. Power is exercised in a different way in the modern era. A new power mechanism with extremely specialised procedural skills was created in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

Power is impersonal because it is neither possessed nor exerted by individuals, groups, or institutions. Foucault termed power as a complex set of relations. The total of an action's influences on other actions is its power. Power needs to be examined as something that circulates, or better yet, as something that only works as a chain. Never is it localised here or there, never is it in someone's hands, and never is it appropriated as a good or a piece of money. Through a network-like organisation, power is employed and wielded. People not only move between its threads, but they are also constantly in the position to experience and use its power. Power is not something or a capacity that may be possessed by the State, a certain social class, or a specific person. Instead, it is a relation between different individuals and groups and only exists when it is being exercised.

In the novel, when war breaks out Felon joins the Special Operations Executive, the secret organization is liable for coordinating the activities of resistance movements in the occupied territories of Europe, becoming what is known as a 'Gatherer'. In this capacity he recruits Rose, who takes the code name Viola and works along with Felon as a radio operator. But he also employees others, some of whom go on to become the guardians prearranged to watch over Nathaniel and Rachel. For some time their work, much of which involves the brutal sanguine struggles in Italy and Yugoslavia, is highly successful. But things come unstuck when Felon is captured by one of the groups who have found themselves on the wrong side of the fight. Rose, determined to care for her children, severs her connections with Felon and

the intelligence services. Thus she controlled the territorial space of her children for their protection and implemented her power over them.

TERRITORIAL SECURITY

Territorial security is a prerequisite for allowing regular people and legal goods to travel within and across national boundaries with some degree of freedom, while preventing the free movement of illicit items and people who pose security risks. In war-torn nations, where many routes are dotted with landmines, roadside bombs, and roadblocks, borders are permeable due to difficult terrain, and air, land, and seaports are under the control of saboteurs and criminals, establishing this condition have proven to be incredibly difficult. Citizens can move around freely without worrying about being attacked. Moving around facilitates social integration in populations that might otherwise remain segregated. To stay updated on what enters and leaves the country, or to stop risks to security and legitimate trade, state borders must be controlled. In the shape of transnational organised crime, unfriendly neighbours, the proliferation of armaments, and international terrorism, many destabilising factors originate from outside of national borders. Long-term gains for global commerce and economic growth can also come from streamlining export and customs procedures at the border.

Teenage kid Nathaniel Williams, the narrator, is left in the care of two men who may or may not have been criminals with his somewhat older sister Rachel. In 1945, their mother Rose vanishes from their lives, ostensibly to carry out some form of undercover or espionage activity. They consequently spend their teenage years surrounded by strangers, including a man they call The Moth, a greyhound racer they call the Darter, and various individuals who come and go from their life. These children are surrounded by characters who inhabit a brutal world of sectarian strife and dishonesty. The most intriguing characters are introduced along the route and then disappear, only to emerge later in unexpected places. These characters include gamblers, lovers, scientists, cooks, and climbers. The strangers who moved into the house end up taking care of Nathaniel and his sister Rachel despite their reluctance. Rose, Nathaniel's mysterious and reclusive mother, had amazing adventures that he would never fully comprehend. Later, he finds out that his mother is a British government intelligence agent. Their mother worries that her war time activities may affect their children. She created a territory for her children and secured them with the help of the characters around them. Territorial security provided by her mother gave them the safest life. Hence, Territorial security is found to be important after encountering a war with relevance to the novel.

HUMAN TERRITORIALITY

A person or group's territoriality is a pattern of attitudes and behaviour based on perceived, attempted, or actual control of a physical space, object, or idea. Territoriality may encompass habitual occupation, defence, personalization, and marking of the territory. Personalization refers to the marking in a manner that indicates one's identity.

Territoriality is usually associated with the ownership of some physical space, but it can also involve processes like dominance, control, conflict, security, claim staking, identity and vigilance. If a territory is significant to a person, his or her sense of identity may be closely united to it. Although it is sometimes related with aggression, territoriality actually is much more responsible for the smooth function of society because most people, most of the time, respect the territories of others.

In the novel, *Rose*, is a woman with a captivating double life as a spy. Her war life made her to take control over the space of her children, especially for their security. This geographical control over the mobility of her children indicates territoriality.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Space has significant role in the implementation of power
- Territorial security is found to be important after encountering a war
- Human Territoriality is traced in Michael Ondaatje's *Warlight*.

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