



# The Echoes And Evocations Of Trauma In Michael Ondaatje's *Divisadero*

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**Abstract:** This research paper explores the traumatic experience passed over on the characters in Michael Ondaatje's *Divisadero*. It raises the possibility that some wounds may never completely mend and that seeking medical attention may occasionally cause more division. The complexity of trauma and its long-lasting effects on people are depicted by Ondaatje, who also emphasizes the fragility and resilience that are part of the human experience.

**Keywords:** Literature, Trauma theory, echoes and evocations of Trauma

The term "literature" is usually used to refer to works of the creative imagination, such as poetry, theatre, fiction, and nonfiction, it may also be used to illustrate anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific work. Literature, in the words of Terry Eagleton, is "a body of writing marked by aesthetic qualities of beauty, imaginative power, and emotional intensity, and exhibiting a concern for language and form."

The sixth novel authored by Canadian poet, fiction writer, essayist, novelist, editor, cultural exponent, and filmmaker Michael Ondaatje was published in 2007. He was born in Sri Lanka. *Divisadero* is a complex, interconnected book that, via the experiences of individuals like Coop, Anna, and Claire, deepens our comprehension of the effects of horrific events on a range of circumstances. In Michael Ondaatje's book "Divisadero," trauma plays a significant role that affects the relationships, behaviours, and overall lives of the characters. The book explores how people cope with and are affected by their traumatic past events, as well as emotional, psychological, and physical trauma.

The Greek phrase that signifies "a wound, a hurt, or a defeat" is where the word "trauma" originates. Trauma, from a psychological perspective, describes an unpleasant event that results in abnormal stress. Trauma reactions can have detrimental effects on a person's physical, mental, emotional, and behavioural health. Everyone responds differently to traumatic situations depending on the situation, the particulars of the incident, and the individual's background and identity.

### **The echoes and evocations of Trauma**

In *Divisadero*, Ondaatje introduces a family living in the north part of California in the 1970's. The family comprises a widowed father and his two daughters, namely Anna, his biological daughter, and Claire, an orphan whom he brought home from the hospital with Anna (whose mother passed away during childbirth). Another predominant character is the boy, Coop, living with them in the farm-house. One such of the central predominant themes which amplified the traumatic events in the novel occurs early on when the protagonist, Anna, witnesses the violent attack on his father by a hired hand on their California farm. Coop's parents were slain by a hired hand "...Copper's family was killed by a hired hand who beat them to death with a wooden board" when he was a young boy "...four years old... (D 11)". This event profoundly affects Anna, her sister Claire, and their father too, altering the course of their lives and relationships forever. The trauma of witnessing this violence leaves a lasting imprint on Anna and Claire, shaping their identities and influencing their choices as they grow older.

This paper peels off the traumatic experience undergone by these three important characters. It will show their traumatic experience on different occasions. As a young boy Coop lives with the farmer and his own daughter Anna and the informal adoption of a child from the same hospital, where Anna was born named Claire. Both of these two girls' mothers died after giving birth on the same day. The study peels off the engrossment psychological examination of the enormous pain endured by the main characters in the novel *Divisadero*. Farm house is the background, where the widower farmer and his own daughter Anna, Claire is the adopted daughter along with Coop. In the beginning Coop's separation from his family after the death of his own parents. This situation unfortunately makes him to become a former "He (Anna's father) was training him as a farmer and nothing else" (D 9) instead of getting into education. With the accompaniment of loneliness, he grows up in a cabin very close to the farm house. Often Anna visits his dwelling place while he does his regular activities and provides books to him for reading. She helped him voluntarily and that paved the way to become very close with him. On a rainy day, particularly Anna finds accompanying him in order

to paint the table “she bought a can of blue paint to match the blue on one of the flags, and lugged it uphill to the cabin” (D 30). The blue color suggests sky, which means she wants to be like the sky, usually related to space, limitless, clearness, and peacefulness “...and blue is sky, limitless space or mind (D 30).” They became very close and started loving each other. When Anna’s father emerged in his grandfather’s cabin where Coop resides as a refugee, caught him hand in hand and beat him brutally. Here, as a father he assumes that these three children will be brothers and sisters. But the scenario has been changed. Divisadero particularly dealt with the reminiscence of traumatic experience that is carried down through generations within families. In particular, his connection with Coop, the farm's supervisor, and his experiences as an orphan have left Anna's father with his own wounds from the past. Following generations, these unresolved tragedies continue to impact Anna, Claire, and other family members. The traumatic experience he underwent affects him physically and mentally vice versa. In the scores time after the incident, he was then forced to become a big gambler that was the topsy-turvy in his life. In the same way Anna also happens to leave home for the horrific and terrible incident faced by her. Her birth itself a tragedy, the very momentum Anna was aloof and being separated from the mother’s love and affection.

In "Divisadero," a book by Michael Ondaatje, Anna is a multifaceted character who experiences trauma in a variety of ways. The work delves into topics of identity, loss, and the influence of one's personal past on oneself. Here are a few types of the trauma Anna experienced in her life. At a young age, Anna suffers the trauma of losing her family. After a violent incident, she is taken in by the gentle farmer Coop and separated from her sister Claire. Through the course of the book, Anna's personality and relationships are shaped by the emotional scar left by her separation from her family. Because of her horrific early experiences, Anna feels emotionally alone. She finds it difficult to relate to others and build lasting connections, and she frequently suppresses her feelings out of self-defence. That emotional detachment exacerbates her inner turmoil while acting as a protective mechanism against additional trauma. Anna experiences emotional distress in addition to upheaval and volatility in her romantic relationships. She develops a complex and turbulent romantic relationship with Rafael, Coop's foster son, which causes her to feel betrayed and heartbroken. Anna's sense of trauma intensifies and her emotional vulnerability is made worse by this romantic conflict.

Anna struggles with an identity dilemma stemming from her terrible history throughout the entire book. She faces issues of self-discovery and belonging as she tries to make sense of her history and present. Anna's story is already complicated, but her continuing identity struggle adds another level of anguish as she tries to make

sense of who she really is in the midst of her chaotic background. Anna struggles with an identity dilemma stemming from her terrible history throughout the entire book. She faces issues of self-discovery and belonging as she tries to make sense of her history and present. Anna's story is already complicated, but her continuing identity struggle adds another level of anguish as she tries to make sense of who she really is in the midst of her chaotic background.

Claire is a pivotal figure in *Divisadero*. Her relationships and life are profoundly impacted by the multiple ways in which her trauma is examined. When Claire's family is destroyed at a young age, she goes through a great deal of sorrow and separation. Being cut off from her sister Anna and her familiar family is a significant turning point in her life. Growing up in the wake of her family's breakup, Claire battles with her identity. Her sense of trauma is exacerbated by her attempts to make sense of her shattered history and her struggles with belonging. Claire's emotional isolation and alienation from people are symptoms of her trauma. Perhaps as a result of the hurt from her past experiences, she finds it difficult to build strong connections or to fully trust other people. Claire sets out on a quest of healing and self-discovery throughout the novel. She looks into her past, faces her trauma, and attempts to find closure. There are obstacles and successes along the path in this process, which is presented as complicated and nonlinear. And also explores memory and forgiveness as it follows Claire as she struggles with her past. She faces up to her traumatic past and tries to forgive everyone who was a part of it, including herself.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the novel *Divisadero* explores memory, identity, and relationships, and Claire's trauma is a major subject that forms her persona. By sensitively and nuanced narrating her path, Ondaatje gives readers a gripping and incredibly human portrait of tragedy and its impacts. Hence all the characters in the novel underwent a lot of problems in different situations in their life which can be categorized as trauma. Literary theorist Cathy Caruth is well-known for her contributions to trauma theory, especially as it relates to literature. In *Divisadero*, Ondaatje explores how trauma affects his characters psychologically and looks at how the past continues to influence them. The book examines a range of trauma kinds, like personal trauma, interpersonal trauma and generational trauma.

As Despite without making direct mention to Caruth's theories, its examination of trauma is consistent with his beliefs regarding how traumatic events upend traditional narratives and remain ingrained in the minds of both people and communities. Caruth's observations about the nature of traumatic experience are consistent with Ondaatje's nuanced depiction of trauma, which demonstrates a thorough awareness of its complexity.

The main protagonists are Coop, Anna and Claire undergo trauma which affects their childhood as well adulthood life which leads to disharmony and dissociation in their family. The integration of emotional, psychological, social and physiological wellbeing has been scattered and fragmented because of the enforcement of trauma.

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