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Element of Memory in *The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood

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Abstract:

It is a historical novel with flesh-back mode narration. The novel is structured with multiple narrative layers. This novel interweaves 'family history' and 'nation's history' It has been written in the story telling formation which introduces a novel within a novel. At the age of 82 Iris Chase, the narrator of the story who narrates the Chase family in which she included the horrible scenario of World War II in correlation with personal history. It is also considered as a meta- fictional fairy tale. Atwood has given the voice to Irish through which she narrates the story of her family in a very complicated manner.

Keywords: Historical Novel, Flash-back Mode, Family History and Nation's History.

Margaret Atwood is a well-known and prolific Canadian novelist, poet, short story writer and critic who won the Booker Prize and Britain's top literary award for fiction through *The Blind Assassin* in 2000. The novel is structured with multiple narrative layers. It weaves together the personal memoirs of the protagonist, Iris Chase, with excerpts from a science fiction novel written by Laura, her sister called 'The Blind Assassin.' These layers of storytelling create a sense of fragmented memory and history, inviting readers to question the reliability of the narrators and the truth of the events. Time and memory are recurring themes as the narrative shifts between past and present. The characters' grapple with the past impact on their lives and the difficulty reconciling memory with reality. Iris Chase's memoir serves as a primary vehicle for exploring the interplay between memory and history. Through her recollections, readers gain insight into her personal experiences and how they are shaped by the historical and societal context of the 20th century. the novel delves into the history of the Chase family,

including its rise and fall in the business world, which reflects broader historical and economic changes. The family's secrets and tragedies are intertwined with the broader historical backdrop, highlighting how personal and familial memory is connected to larger historical narratives.

This novel interweaves 'family history' and 'nation's history.' She depicts the condition of the Second World War and narrates the events leading to the downfall of The Chase Family in such a manner that we cannot separate each other. This novel has an ambiguous form of a story-within-story-within-story. Memory and history are intricately linked to the theme of loss and grief. Iris's memories of Laura, her sister and her tragic fate are central to the narrative. Her attempts to preserve and make sense of these memories are woven throughout the novel, revealing how personal memory can shape one understands of the past. The present novel is about two sisters, Laura Chase who dies in a car accident in 1945 under ambiguous circumstances. Irish Chase, the narrator who is the wife of Richard Griffin, an industrialist lives alone in port Ticonderoga. In her middle nineties, Iris' life oscillates between her uncertain present and mysteries of her past. She collects the past and the mysterious death of her sister Laura in the novel. The inclusion of Laura's science fiction story within the novel adds another layers tho the exploration of memory and history. The fictional book within the book raises questions about the boundaries between reality and fiction, emphasizing how storytelling can shape our perception of history. It simultaneously shows the downfall of the industrial sector during the Second World War and also correlates it with issues like feminine and its effect on the male dominated society.

It focusses on these narratives to cater an interchangeable story, slowly making it become clearer over time, with the use of darkness imagery, interlaces allusions to myths, fairy tales, literature, and the Bible to explore the ways we all blindly "assassinate" in personal and political wars calling for sacrifice; making the story come to a whole at the end. Robinson clearly stated that the novel has been regarded by the author herself as a "collage" (qtd. in Robinson 59).

"Ten days after the war ended, my sister Laura drove a car off a bridge." Thus the novel initiates, as does the first-person narrative of Iris Chase, who is writing from the perspective granted by old age.

She tells her own story and that of her younger sister Laura, and how from a young age any chance of simplicity was totally abolished from their lives. First by circumstances, that comprised world war and economic recession, secondly, by the invasion of ruthless, ambitious people into their respective lives. Margaret utilized this story perspective admirably as a template character to the other two narrative perspectives. This was the first strand that she used to mingle her stories together. It has been processed in this way by the sure use of subtle hints and unlikely illusions within her dark imagery. Another aspect of "the blind assassin" included disgraceful memories of Iris that intermingled with the tale of Chase sisters. This is the second narrative beings to take effect from Iris's mind. It's about a man and a woman involved in a surreptitious love saga, inevitably doomed by any means, but their secret and passionate meetings are highlighted by the sci-fi fable; she tells her lover every time they meet.

This love affair creates a monologue of the time period when Canada was snuffing out all of the union workers. The lady is only known as the women, but it comes to the point of reckoning that Iris is writing about herself. In another dimension of time, in a land called Sakiel-Norn, we see an entire society live in luxury but at the expense of sadistic yearly sacrifices and the hands and eyes of unlucky slave children. The last narrative perspective is hidden nicely hidden within this story. With deft hands the children weave the most beautiful and intricate fabrics with vibrating colors and exotic textures, but after only a few years they are blinded by their prodigious work. They are then subjected to prostitutes, thieves, and finally, assassins. The story is told in elaborate but subtle installments. Using the only characters, the blind assassin and the mute priestess as the final elemental aspect to reveal the plot of Iris's life. In other words, whenever Iris has been restricted merely within the book, it seems that she has been blind, moreover, she was assumingly speechless around her world.

Although the principle idea of "the blind assassin" is "novel within novel", but we eventually find several articles from various newspapers and popular magazines where the objectivity of the novel might be under scanner to establish a somewhat different proposition. However, due to the dates and references are pointed to the actual events, it more likely illustrates that the novel is embedded in historical perspectives. I would like to like quote Linda Hutcheon's own words to emphasize this fact, "irony does indeed mark the difference from the past, but the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm—textually and hermeneutically—the connection with the past" (Hutcheon 125). The most striking example of intertextuality takes place as literary critic Hilde Staels perfectly pointed out by mentioning Herodotus (153). Herodotus was a Greek philosopher and arguably, the first historian. Staels mentioned that the stories of Herodotus comprised of facts that pertaining to the Metafictional elements (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Incidentally, Herodotus has been cited twice: once by Iris to her reader (345) and once by the woman "in the blind assassin" to her lover (421). In both instances, they assumingly, mentioned the name of Herodotus to prove their historical knowledge, without really knowing the actual past. It's quite ironic as they might cite the fictional stories of Herodotus, without knowing too much about that. Therefore, we can say, there is a contrasting array of events take place here; comprising historical narratives, resurrection and reconstruction of facts that have been already done and dusted, historical phenomena, holding the undeviating evidences of time.

Martin Amis's novel "Time's arrow" personifies two aspects of narrative metafiction: the vertical break up of perception that differentiates narrator and protagonist residing in the same body frame, and secondly, the allocation of instantaneousness, that, in turn, makes the illusion of past and future. In other words, this initiates the narrator to persevere in understanding the protagonist in a totally reverse manner (Amis 1987). This historiographical metafiction, represents a remarkable resilience, catering two distinct crisis: one sneaking through and the other hovering around, procuring the mass devastation in either direction. As a whole, however, "Time's arrow" magnifies, arguably, the most catastrophic crisis of 20th century, by illustrating the apocalyptic and rupturing events. Not only that, Amis, through this metafiction predicts the upcoming adverse thing to come.

This Holocaust framework determines the postmodern style and the subjectivity of Time's Arrow. Moreover, it intensifies the ruptured temporality of the narrative and the splitting of subjectivity of its main character. In reality, both of them lurking behind the narrator/protagonist's participation in the Nazi genocide. Time's Arrow begins with a perception where, the principle character has become intensely embedded with his body and intricate that the first- narrator partially identifies himself in the body he resides. The metafiction temporality dismantles the overall orientation of the rationale, considering the past and present. Healing turns into violence, the veil Holocaust has been erased as the destruction becomes more pronounced rather than creativity. War has been inevitable, moreover, the entire perspective of the novel assumingly trapped in a perpetual state of crisis. Catastrophic destruction pertains to the fact, owing to the shortening of history and upcoming future.

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