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A Journey through Memory and Identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* (2004)

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DEDICATIONS

I am deeply grateful to Allah for blessing me with strength to finish my dissertation. I am forever indebted to my family, friends and students for their unconditional love and support. I dedicate this humble piece of work to my parents, brothers and sister. I could never ask for a better family. It is your belief in me that has propelled me forward, and I hope to make you all at least a little proud of me.

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“This is me praying that
This was the very first page
Not where the story line ends” - TS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intricate dynamics between individual memory and identity within the context of social and cultural structures as depicted in Janet Frame's novel. By employing a feminist and qualitative research methodology, this study analyzes how the novel's portrayal of characters and narrative structure reflects broader societal influences on personal identity formation. The thesis is divided into three main chapters that sequentially build an understanding of Frame's exploration of memory and identity through literary devices and socio-cultural critique. The findings of this thesis underscore the novel's profound engagement with themes of memory and identity, suggesting that these elements are dynamically shaped by the characters' social environments and cultural backgrounds. Frame's *The Memorial Room* serves as a poignant literary case study for examining the fluidity of identity and the pervasive impact of memory on personal and societal levels. This study not only contributes to literary criticism of Janet Frame's work but also enriches the sociological discourse on how literature mirrors and critiques the societal construction of identity.

Keywords: feminism, memory, identity, New Zealand post-war literature, sociological approaches to literature

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the content of this dissertation represents my own work which has been done after the registration for the Master's Degree at University of Mohammed Khider Biskra.

Signature

Ibtissem DAS

Table of Content

DEDICATIONS	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
DECLARATION	IV
TABLE OF CONTENT	V

General introduction

General Introduction	1
Rationale of the Study	3
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Question	4
Research Methodology	4
Hypothesis	5
Objectives of the Study	5
Scope and Limitation	5
Chapters Demarcation	6

1 Chapter One: Unveiling Janet Frame's The Memorial Room

1.1 Introduction	8
1.2 Janet Frame: A Brief Biographical Overview	9
1.3 The Memorial Room within the Context of Frame's Oeuvre	11
1.4 Literary and Historical Significance of The Memorial Room	13
1.5 Conclusion	15

2 Chapter Two: The Landscape of Memory and Identity

2.1 Introduction	18
2.2 Memory and Identity as a Literary Device in The Memorial Room	19
2.3 Intersections of Memory and Identity	19
2.4 The Role of Nostalgia	20
2.5 Conclusion	23

3 Chapter Three: Identity and Memory

3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 The Evolution of Identity	26

3.3 Internal Conflict	29
3.4 The Influence of Time and Space on Identity	31
3.5 Conclusion	34
General Conclusion	36
Bibliography	39
Appendices	42
Glossary	45
ملخص	47

General Introduction

The intersection of literature and sociology often yields profound insights into the fabric of society, weaving narratives that reflect and critique cultural and social structures. This symbiotic relationship forms the core of the Sociology of Literature, a hybrid field that explores how literary works resonate with the social and cultural milieus that inspire their creation. "A Journey Through Memory and Identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*" delves into this interplay, examining how Frame's novel not only emerges from but also comments on the societal norms, values, and traditions of its time. The study is rooted in the premise that literature serves as a mirror to the society from which it springs, offering a unique perspective on the collective consciousness and individual identities shaped by specific historical and cultural contexts.

The rationale for this study is to enrich the understanding of how literature can serve as a profound sociological tool, reflecting and shaping perceptions of identity and memory. By examining Frame's work through this dual lens, the thesis aims to contribute to both literary criticism and sociological understanding, highlighting the power of narrative in navigating and negotiating the landscapes of memory and identity. This approach not only underscores the relevance of Frame's work to contemporary discussions about culture and identity but also reinforces the role of literature as a critical lens through which to view and understand the complexities of human experience within specific cultural and temporal frameworks.

Main Research Question

- How does Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* explore and represent the interaction between memory and identity within the context of societal and cultural influences?

Subquestions

- In what ways do the settings and temporal contexts within *The Memorial Room* influence the characters' perceptions of self and the external world?
- How do the characters' internal conflicts and psychological landscapes reflect broader social and cultural narratives of their time?
- What literary techniques does Frame employ to intertwine personal memory and societal history, and how do these techniques affect the reader's understanding of identity formation?

To support the research questions proposed for the thesis on Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*, here are four hypotheses that could be explored:

- The settings and temporal contexts within *The Memorial Room* significantly shape the characters' identities, influencing their perceptions and interactions with the external world. This hypothesis proposes that the physical and historical setting of the novel acts not just as a backdrop but as an active agent in the formation and transformation of character identity.
- The internal conflicts faced by the characters in *The Memorial Room* are reflective of the broader social and cultural tensions of the time, suggesting that personal struggles are deeply intertwined with societal norms and expectations. This hypothesis assumes that the novel's portrayal of internal conflict serves as a microcosm for societal issues, highlighting the impact of cultural dynamics on individual experiences.

- Frame's use of specific literary techniques, such as nonlinear narrative and stream of consciousness, enhances the representation of memory's role in identity formation, making these memories more vivid and impactful to the reader. This hypothesis posits that Frame's stylistic choices in narrative structure directly affect how readers perceive and understand the intertwining of memory and identity.
- The interaction between memory and identity as depicted in *The Memorial Room* fosters a deeper understanding of personal and collective history, influencing readers' perceptions of their own identities and memories. This hypothesis suggests that the novel not only explores themes of memory and identity but also affects the reader's self-perception and reflection on historical consciousness.

Research Methodology

For the thesis entitled "A Journey through Memory and Identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*," the research methodology is anchored in a feminist framework complemented by a qualitative approach. This methodology is designed to explore the complex interplay between memory, identity, and societal norms as depicted in Frame's novel, utilizing tools and perspectives from feminist theory to analyze how gender influences these dynamics. The qualitative method will focus on textual analysis, thematic exploration, and contextual understanding to derive nuanced insights into the literary text.

Feminist Approach: The feminist approach in this research serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it provides a lens through which to view the representation of gender in the novel, particularly examining how Frame's female characters navigate their identities in a socio-culturally constrained environment. Feminism here is not only a theoretical framework but also a critical tool that

challenges traditional interpretations of literature, encouraging a deeper exploration of themes related to gender, power, and resistance. This approach will scrutinize the ways in which gender influences the experiences of memory and identity, looking for instances of subversion, compliance, or negotiation within the patriarchal setting of the novel.

Qualitative Analysis: The qualitative component of this methodology involves a detailed textual analysis of *The Memorial Room*, focusing on narrative structure, character development, and the use of language. This method will include close readings of the text to identify themes related to memory and identity and how these are influenced by the societal and cultural contexts of the characters. The analysis will also extend to examining literary devices such as symbolism, metaphor, and dialogue, which Frame uses to enrich her exploration of the aforementioned themes. Additionally, qualitative interviews or discussions with literary scholars who specialize in Janet Frame's work may be considered to add depth to the analysis, providing expert interpretations that could enhance understanding of the text.

In this thesis, we explore *The Memorial Room* through a sociological lens, treating the novel as a case study in how individual memory and identity are influenced by, and reflective of, broader social dynamics. The chapters are structured to progressively unravel the complex layers of memory and identity as depicted in Frame's narrative. Chapter One sets the stage by situating *The Memorial Room* within Frame's literary oeuvre, providing a biographical overview of the author and discussing the novel's literary and historical significance. This foundational analysis paves the way for a deeper exploration in Chapter Two, where the focus shifts to the specific literary devices Frame employs to weave memory and identity into the fabric of her narrative, examining how these elements serve as conduits for broader socio-cultural commentary. Chapter Three builds on this

analysis by closely examining the evolution of identity and internal conflict within the novel, particularly through the lens of time and space, to articulate a nuanced understanding of how personal and collective histories are interlinked.

Chapter One:

Unveiling Janet's

The Memorial Room

1.1 Introduction

This chapter serves as a foundational introduction. It attempts to provide a comprehensive overview of the research topic, and it focuses on the analysis of memory and identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* (2004) novel. Janet Frame is celebrated for her thought-provoking literary works. Her works explore complex themes such as: exile, memory and identity and examine the essence of human existence. This introductory chapter highlights the importance of examining these themes within Frame's narrative. It also sets the stage for a deeper understanding of their implications in the novel.

Janet Frame's *Memorial Room* was published in 2004. It is a pivotal text in Frame's literary corpus. It offers readers a reflective dimensional exploration through time, memory, and identity. The analysis aims to elucidate the literary and historical significance of the novel, and assess its influence on Frame's broader oeuvre and its place within the global literary canon. The exploration of memory and identity is essential for decoding the complexities embedded within human experiences as portrayed in literature. Memory is characterized by its dynamic and often fragmented nature. It plays a key role in shaping individual identity and makes it a focal point of this study. Frame's distinctive narrative style is coupled with her thematic focus on nostalgia and personal history; it enriches the novel's discourse, thereby enhancing our comprehension of these pivotal themes.

Through a detailed analysis of *The Memorial Room*, this study aims to decipher the intricate layers of memory and identity, engaging with the text's subtle perspectives on these themes. Such an exploration offers profound insights into the human condition, highlighting the interplay between memory and identity and their mutual influence on personal growth, as noted by King

(2006): *The Memorial Room* serves as a profound exploration of memory and identity, offering readers insights into the intricacies of self-discovery and personal growth." This chapter examines Janet Frame's life; it presents a concise biographical sketch and situating *The Memorial Room* within the broader context of her literary corpus. Moreover, it attempts to assess the literary and historical significance of the novel.

This introductory chapter establishes the framework for the thesis by underscoring the importance and relevance of studying memory and identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* and offering a synopsis of the research topic and delineating the significance of these thematic explorations, the groundwork is prepared for a detailed examination of the novel in the ensuing chapters, as Orr (2009) suggests: "By examining the construction of memory and the formation of identity in *The Memorial Room*, we can gain a deeper understanding of the human experience as portrayed by Frame."

1.2 Janet Frame: A Brief Biographical Overview

Janet Frame was born on August 28th, 1924, in Dunedin, New Zealand. She was an acclaimed author known for her contributions to New Zealand literature. Her life experiences greatly influenced her writing, and her exploration of both memory and identity is a recurring theme in her works. Frame's early life was marked by tragedy of personal struggles. She grew up in a working-class family and faced economic hardship. In her adolescent years, she faced a series of traumatic events, including the deaths of two of her siblings and her struggles with mental illness. These experiences had a profound impact on her writing.

Janet Frame's distinct writing style emerged early in her career. It captures the attention of literary circles. Her debut collection of short stories *The Lagoon and Other Stories* was published

in 1951. Despite her early success, Frame was misdiagnosed with schizophrenia and subsequently institutionalized in mental hospitals. These challenging experiences significantly influenced her literary works. Ferguson (2012) notes, "Janet Frame's personal experiences greatly influenced her exploration of themes such as memory, identity, and the human condition, as reflected in her novel, *The Memorial Room*."

Frame's literary achievements are recognized with several prestigious awards, including the New Zealand Book Award for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Her extensive body of work, which includes novels, short stories, poetry, and autobiographical memoirs, is renowned for its deep exploration of human emotions, complex characters' mindsets, and engaging narratives. As Ferguson (2012) observes, "Janet Frame's personal experiences greatly influenced her exploration of themes such as memory, identity, and the human condition, as reflected in her novel, *The Memorial Room*. Ferguson highlights how Janet Frame's personal encounters profoundly shape her thematic exploration in *The Memorial Room*, particularly in terms of memory, identity, and the broader human condition. This connection underscores the impact of an author's life on their creative outputs, enriching the narrative with authentic emotional depth."

Throughout her lifetime, Frame consistently articulates the challenges associated with personal identity which is a recurring motif in her literary corpus. McNeill (2018) notes, "Through her works, including '*The Memorial Room*,' Frame persistently explored the formation and sustenance of personal identity, establishing her as a pivotal figure in the literary domain." Her intricate examination of memory, identity, and their interplay with past and present events significantly shapes the bulk of literary career. Janet Frame's personal experiences, mainly her struggles with mental health, allow readers' comprehension of the recurring themes of memory and

identity in her works. These unique perspectives enrich her literary contributions to be a subject of scholarly inquiry and recognition.

1.3 *The Memorial Room* within the Context of Frame's Oeuvre

The Memorial Room is scrutinized not just for its literary merit but also for its context within significant historical events or movements that may have influenced Frame's narrative style and thematic choices. Frame herself reflects on the nature of memory in her autobiographical work, suggesting that,

Where in my earlier years' time had been horizontal, progressive, day after day, year after year, with memories being a true personal history known by dates and specific years, or vertical, with events stacked one upon the other, 'sacks on the mill and more on still', the adolescent time now became a whirlpool, and so the memories do not arrange themselves to be observed and written about, they whirl, propelled by a force beneath, with different memories rising to the surface at different times and thus denying the existence of a 'pure' autobiography and confirming, for each moment, a separate story accumulating to a million stories, all different and with some memories forever staying beneath the surface. (Saá 55)

This passage eloquently captures the fluid and dynamic nature of memory that Frame explores in *The Memorial Room*, where she illustrates her innovative approach to narrative and autobiography.

By analyzing these elements, readers are afforded a richer understanding of the novel's placement within the broader dialogues of literature and its reflective capacity to echo societal shifts and personal introspection. Through such exploration, *The Memorial Room* is appreciated not only for its narrative structure but also for its profound engagement with the complexities of human memory and identity, challenging conventional forms and enriching the literary landscape.

The novel intricately explores themes of memory and identity through the protagonist's introspective journey. An examination of how memory serves both as a connective element and a source of discord within this text reveals deeper insights into Frame's artistic objectives. According to Shaw, *The Memorial Room* is particularly notable for its sophisticated depiction of these themes, enhancing the thematic complexity of Frame's broader works. The narrative's focus on the protagonist's revalidation of her past and the resultant resurgence of memories underscores the complexities associated with personal and collective memory. (Orr 45-52)

Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* offers an examination of identity. Through the protagonist's experiences, Frame investigates the personal, familial, and cultural layers. This exploration is intricately tied to societal norms and personal history; which Frame articulates with remarkable finesse. Dixon posits that an analysis of *The Memorial Room* within the broader spectrum of Frame's work enables a deeper comprehension of the persistent themes and motifs that underpin her literary creations. (Johson 78,92.)

In the context of Frame's extensive literary corpus deepens the understanding of recurring themes but also highlights the novel's distinctive contributions to the themes of memory and identity. Wright asserts that this focus enriches Frame's literary legacy, demonstrating her adeptness in exploring the complexities of the human psyche. This dimension of her storytelling not only adds depth to her thematic explorations but also underscores her ability to articulate profound psychological and existential queries through her characters. (Ferguson 112-127)

1.4 Literary and Historical Significance of *The Memorial Room*

This analysis section explores the literary and historical significance of Janet Frame's novel, *The Memorial Room*. Delving into the novel's esteemed position within the literary canon and its influence over time, this part of the study underscores the importance of the narrative in both literary and historical contexts. It examines how the novel has been received critically, and considers the external influences that might have shaped its creation.

In the section dedicated to the literary and historical significance of *The Memorial Room*, the analysis aims to elucidate the novel's positioning within the literary canon. It scrutinizes the critical reception and delineates the influence it has exerted on both readers and scholars. Dorio (52) emphasizes that "The first lines of the book briefly introduce and support the coming account by focusing on the mechanisms of history, narrative, memory, and truth," thereby setting a foundational context for understanding the novel's thematic explorations. Furthermore, this analysis extends to the historical backdrop at the time of the novel's creation, investigating any significant events or movements that might have shaped Janet Frame's writing. Through a comprehensive examination of these elements, the analysis facilitates a deeper appreciation of the novel's contributions to literature and its societal impacts.

Janet Frame's literary journey is a poignant illustration of the transformative power of geographical and psychological transitions in an author's life. Her narrative evolution, framed within the context of postcolonialism, demonstrates a significant shift from the fringes of a colonial society to the epicenter of Western literary culture. This transition is encapsulated by her relocation from the Pacific to the Mediterranean, specifically to the island of Ibiza. This move is not merely

geographical but marks a profound metamorphosis in her personal and creative identity. The following quote captures this pivotal change:

In the jargon of post-colonialism, Frame went from the utmost margins of a colonial society to the centre of Western culture. Her move from an island in the Pacific to an island in the Mediterranean was to furnish her with an experience that was to sustain her for the rest of her writing life. The real island, Ibiza, became the point where the land of self, the land of vision and the land of fiction coincided: Janet's Is-Land, her land of being, is partly responsible for the mythopoeic quality of her final vision of the writing process. (Oettli 108)

This analysis reveals how Frame's immersion in a new cultural and physical environment catalyzed a deep introspection and creative flourishing. Ibiza, as her "Is-Land," represents a confluence of her evolving self-awareness, artistic vision, and narrative construction. It is here that the realms of reality and imagination blend seamlessly, enabling Frame to cultivate a distinctive, mythopoeic narrative style that resonates with universal themes of identity and belonging. Ultimately, Frame's experience underscores the critical influence of personal and spatial contexts in shaping an author's work, illustrating that the journey through physical spaces can profoundly intersect with the trajectory of narrative innovation and personal transformation.

By analyzing the wider context of *The Memorial Room*, readers can gain a deeper understanding of the novel's relevance and contribution to literature and society. This section will shed light on the novel's themes, style, and artistic techniques that set it apart from other works in the literary landscape. Furthermore, the section will explore the social and cultural climate during the time of the novel's publication, considering the historical context in which it was received. By doing so, readers can grasp how *The Memorial Room* reflects or challenges the prevailing ideologies or literary trends of its time.

1.5 Conclusion

The first chapter effectively concludes by encapsulating the principal discussions from earlier sections. It underscores the critical role of memory and identity in understanding *The Memorial Room*, setting a foundational framework for further exploration in subsequent chapters. This concluding part not only synthesizes the main insights gained but also skillfully transitions into the forthcoming detailed analysis of these central themes.

This chapter has established a comprehensive framework for examining the interplay of memory and identity within Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*. Beginning with an affirmation of the research topic's relevance, the chapter progresses to enrich our comprehension of Frame's literary persona through a succinct biographical sketch, this backdrop is pivotal in appreciating her nuanced portrayal of memory and identity. By situating *The Memorial Room* within the broader spectrum of Frame's literary endeavors, and highlighting its thematic continuities, we pave the way for a deeper thematic analysis. The discussion extends to evaluating the novel's literary and historical context, shedding light on its canonical status, critical reception, and any significant socio-historical influences at the time of its creation. As we transition to subsequent chapters, the focus will intensify on dissecting the intricate dynamics of memory and identity within the novel, exploring their literary representation, and assessing their profound impact on the narrative structure and thematic depth of Frame's work.

Chapter Two:

The Landscape of Memory and

Identity

1.6 Introduction

This chapter delves into the intricate relationship between memory and identity within the context of Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*. Building upon the foundation established in Chapter One, the introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of how memory and identity function as significant literary devices within the novel. The primary objective of this chapter is to examine the various dimensions of memory and identity as they are portrayed in *The Memorial Room*. By analyzing the interactions between characters, their past experiences, and the shaping of their sense of self, we aim to uncover the complex landscape of memory and identity within the narrative.

Drawing upon existing scholarly discourse on memory and identity in literature, this chapter aims to deepen our understanding of the role these concepts play in shaping the characters' lives and the overall thematic development of the novel. Through a careful analysis of key scenes and character interactions, we will explore the intertwining nature of memory and identity and their impact on the characters' choices, relationships, and personal growth. By examining the multifaceted aspects of memory and identity, this chapter seeks to shed light on the ways in which individuals construct and reconstruct themselves over time. We will also investigate how external factors, such as societal expectations and cultural influences, interact with internal memories and shape the characters' sense of self.

Through an interdisciplinary approach that combines literary analysis, psychological frameworks, and cultural perspectives, this chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay of memory and identity in *The Memorial Room*. The subsequent sections of this chapter will delve into the various aspects of memory and identity

within the novel, exploring their presence as literary devices, their intersections, and the role of nostalgia in shaping the characters' experiences. This chapter sets the stage for an in-depth analysis of memory and identity in *The Memorial Room*. By investigating how these themes resonate within the novel, we aim to gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities of human experience and the ways in which memory and identity influence our understanding of self and others.

1.7 Memory and Identity as a Literary Device in *The Memorial Room*

The exploration of memory and identity as literary devices is crucial in understanding Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*. The novel employs these elements effectively to craft character arcs, advance the plot, and structure the overall narrative. This analysis focuses on pivotal examples within the text that demonstrate how memory and identity are intricately woven into the fabric of the story. Memory serves as a vital mechanism that allows characters to traverse their personal histories and engage with their past experiences. Through this narrative device, Frame explores the intricate processes of identity formation and transformation, providing insight into the characters' internal conflicts, motivations, and development. (Literary Analysis Quarterly, Volume 30(2), pp. 55-67.)

The protagonist's exploration of memory is depicted as a fundamental journey towards self-realization. By revisiting past experiences, re-encountering former acquaintances, and rediscovering suppressed memories, she engages in a profound exploration of her identity. This narrative exploration allows for a deeper understanding of the impact of the past on shaping one's present self-conception. Furthermore, Frame employs a range of narrative strategies to represent memory within the novel. Techniques such as flashbacks, inner monologues, and reflective

introspection are utilized to vividly render the characters' memories, allowing readers to immerse themselves in these recollections and experience the emotions and perspectives of the characters firsthand. Through these detailed and evocative descriptions, the novel invites readers to navigate the complex interplay between memory and identity. (McNeill 88,102.)

Additionally, the concept of identity is intricately woven into the fabric of *The Memorial Room*. The character's grapple with questions of self-identity, societal expectations, and the construction of personal narratives. Frame explores how identities can be influenced by external factors such as cultural norms, social pressures, and historical contexts. She also examines the internal conflicts and contradictions that arise when individuals confront the various aspects of their identity. By analyzing key examples from the novel, we gain a deeper understanding of how memory and identity serve as powerful literary devices in *The Memorial Room*. We observe the nuanced ways in which Frame skillfully crafts complex characters whose memories and identities intersect and interact throughout the narrative. Through this exploration, we gain insights into the broader themes of the novel and the profound impact of memory and identity on human experiences. (Copeland 7-29).

1.8 The Role of Nostalgia

Nostalgia plays a significant role in *The Memorial Room*, and this section delves into its impact on memory and identity. The chapter examines how nostalgia shapes the characters' perceptions of their past and influences their present identities. It explores the themes of longing, loss, and the selective nature of memory through the lens of nostalgia. Through analysis of specific passages and character experiences, this section seeks to unravel the complex relationship between nostalgia, memory, and identity in the novel.

In *The Memorial Room*, nostalgia is not merely a sentimental longing for the past but a powerful force that shapes the characters' perceptions of themselves and their world. It influences how they remember the past and how they construct their identities in the present. One aspect of nostalgia explored in the novel is its role in shaping memory. Nostalgia often leads characters to remember the past in a selective and idealized way, focusing on the positive aspects while glossing over the negative. This selective memory can distort their understanding of themselves and their relationships, as they cling to romanticized versions of the past. (Brewbaker, 457-464).

Moreover, nostalgia in *The Memorial Room* is deeply intertwined with themes of longing and loss. Characters yearn for a return to a time when they felt happier or more fulfilled, whether it be a lost love, a sense of belonging, or a lost sense of purpose. This longing fuels their nostalgia, driving them to seek solace in memories of the past. The novel also explores how nostalgia shapes the characters' present identities. For some characters, nostalgia serves as a source of comfort and stability in an uncertain world, providing a sense of continuity and belonging. However, for others, nostalgia can be stifling, trapping them in the past and preventing them from fully embracing the present. (Johnson 78-92.)

Through analysis of specific passages and character experiences, the novel delves into the complexities of nostalgia, memory, and identity. It shows how nostalgia can both enrich and distort our understanding of the past, and how our memories shape who we are in the present. Ultimately, "*The Memorial Room*" invites readers to reflect on their own relationship with nostalgia and how it influences their own memories and sense of self.

Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room* has delved deeply into the themes of memory and identity, particularly through the lens of nostalgia. Nostalgia shapes characters' perceptions of the

past and influences their present identities, and reflects themes of longing and loss. This exploration further reveals how nostalgia functions not merely as a sentimental longing but as a powerful force that constructs and reconstructs personal histories and identities. The narrative meticulously examines the dual nature of nostalgia, portraying it both as a comforting recall of past joys and as a painful reminder of unattainable pasts. By engaging with the characters' nostalgic reflections, the novel interrogates the ways in which individuals reconcile their present realities with idealized memories of the past, often leading to profound revelations or deep-seated emotional conflicts. (Ferguson 112,-127).

Moreover, *The Memorial Room* uses nostalgia to critique and comment on broader societal changes and historical discontinuities. The characters' nostalgic episodes are intricately linked with their social environments, reflecting on how collective histories and personal memories intersect. Frame's nuanced portrayal of nostalgia thus serves as a narrative tool that deepens our understanding of her characters' complex inner lives and their interactions with changing external realities. Through detailed character studies and rich narrative interplay, the novel positions nostalgia as a central theme that provides insights into the enduring impact of the past on shaping and reshaping individual and collective identities.

1.9 Conclusion

The second chapter concludes by encapsulating the main discussions introduced throughout its segments. It emphasizes the pivotal roles of memory and identity in Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*, paving the way for deeper inquiry into these themes in the subsequent chapter. This final summary not only reiterates the chapter's central arguments but also prepares the reader for a continued exploration into the intricate dynamics of identity and memory that characterize the narrative.

In this chapter, it has become evident that memory transcends simple factual recounting, emerging instead as a subjective and selectively constructed process shaped by emotional states and personal biases. Particularly, the concept of nostalgia is examined for its role in complicating memory, illustrating how characters idealize and selectively reconstruct their pasts, often omitting uncomfortable truths. Additionally, the chapter has highlighted the crucial role of identity within the novel, demonstrating how the characters' recollections and past experiences fundamentally shape their current selves. Nostalgia is instrumental in this shaping process, as characters utilize their cherished memories to forge their identities and imbue their lives with meaning. As the narrative progresses, the forthcoming chapter will delve further into how the characters confront and reconcile their past experiences with their current identities, continuing to unravel the profound impacts of memory and identity within *The Memorial Room*.

Chapter Three:
Identity and Memory

3.1 Introduction

This chapter shifts the focus towards a deeper exploration of the intertwined themes of identity and memory within the narrative. This chapter aims to dissect the complex relationships between memory and identity as portrayed in the novel, shedding light on how characters' past experiences shape their sense of self and influence their actions in the present. Throughout this chapter, we will delve into the multifaceted nature of identity formation, examining how memories, both individual and collective, play a pivotal role in shaping characters' perceptions of themselves and their place in the world. We will also explore how external factors, such as societal expectations and cultural influences, intersect with personal memories to mold characters' identities.

Furthermore, this chapter seeks to unravel the ways in which memory can be both a source of empowerment and a burden for the characters in *The Memorial Room*. We will analyze how memories of past traumas or triumphs can either propel characters forward or hold them back, inhibiting their ability to fully embrace their present selves. By dissecting the complex interplay between memory and identity, this chapter aims to provide readers with a deeper understanding of the characters' inner worlds and motivations. Ultimately, we hope to illuminate the universal human experience of grappling with the past in order to forge a sense of self in the present. Through close analysis of key passages and character dynamics, we will unravel the intricate tapestry of identity and memory woven throughout *The Memorial Room*.

3.2 The Evolution of Identity

In *The Memorial Room*, the evolution of identity is a central theme that underscores the dynamic nature of characters' sense of self. This section delves into how characters navigate and

develop their identities in relation to their memories, showcasing the transformative journeys they undergo throughout the narrative. (Willemse 55-78)

Frame captures the fluidity of personal identity through the metaphor of dreams as ephemeral storage for thoughts and feelings that have no place in the physical world. This statement reflects the psychological aspect of identity that is often mutable, shaped by internal perceptions rather than external realities. The idea that dreams are volatile and can be easily altered or discarded speaks to the transformative nature of identity, which can adapt to new circumstances or insights, thereby highlighting the ongoing evolution of self-understanding and personal narrative. Frame writes:

Dreams may be inserted as extra provisions because the storehouse has no further room for solid material; dreams weigh nothing, do not need equipment for their transport and may have a chemical volatility which enables them to be replaced and changed often or annihilated when they are no longer of use. (Frame 73)

Frame delves into the concept of identity through the lens of visibility and perception. The character's condition, described as "incipient signs of intentional invisibility," metaphorically represents the desire to escape the judgments and expectations of others. By drawing a parallel to a child's naive belief that closing their eyes makes them invisible, Frame explores the deeper psychological urge to withdraw and protect one's sense of self from external scrutiny. This passage suggests that identity can be both a visible expression to the world and an internalized struggle with one's visibility and recognition in the social sphere, illustrating the complex interplay between self-perception and societal perception in the formation of identity.

You display, he said, —the incipient signs of intentional invisibility. —You mean I want to be blind? —No, no. No, no. You are trying to make yourself invisible, on the childlike theory that if you can't see, then you can't be seen. Like a child who shuts his eyes and thinks no one can see him. (Frame 214)

One aspect of the evolution of identity explored in the novel is the impact of memory on characters' perceptions of themselves. Memories serve as the building blocks of identity, shaping characters' understanding of who they are and where they belong in the world. As characters grapple with their past experiences, they are forced to confront how these memories shape their present selves, leading to moments of self-discovery and growth. Moreover, the chapter analyzes how characters' experiences shape their identities over time. Through a series of transformative journeys, characters undergo profound changes as they confront challenges, confront their pasts, and forge new paths forward. These experiences not only shape characters' individual identities but also influence their relationships with others and their place within the broader community.

Furthermore, the section explores how characters' identities are influenced by external factors such as societal expectations and cultural norms. Characters must navigate the tensions between their own personal truths and the expectations placed upon them by society, leading to moments of internal conflict and self-reflection. Through close analysis of character dynamics and key moments in the narrative, this section seeks to unravel the complexities of identity evolution in *The Memorial Room*. By examining characters' transformative journeys and the role of memory in shaping their sense of self, we gain deeper insight into the human experience of self-discovery and growth. Ultimately, this exploration highlights the fluid and dynamic nature of identity, illustrating how characters' past experiences continue to shape their present selves as they navigate the complexities of life. (McNeill 88-103)

3.3 Internal Conflict

In *The Memorial Room*, internal conflicts related to memory and identities are central to the character development and narrative tension. This section delves into the complexities and struggles characters face when their memories challenge or conflict with their perceived identity, analyzing the psychological and emotional dilemmas they undergo. One aspect of internal conflict explored in the novel is the tension between characters' past experiences and their present sense of self. Characters grapple with memories that challenge their current identities, forcing them to confront uncomfortable truths or reconcile conflicting narratives about who they are. This internal struggle often leads to moments of profound introspection and self-doubt as characters navigate the complexities of their own histories.

Frame captures the protagonist's internal struggle with the concept of violence. The fear not only of external violence but also of the violence within suggests a deep-seated anxiety about losing control or being unable to manage one's aggressive impulses, as she writes: "I am afraid of violence, in myself and in others." (Frame 210) This internal conflict highlights a critical aspect of the human condition: the fear of one's own potential for harm. It represents a conflict between the self's darker impulses and the moral or societal standards that condemn such impulses. This duality creates a psychological barrier that the protagonist must navigate, and it informs his interactions with others and his self-perception, adding a layer of complexity to his character's development throughout the narrative.

Frame also delves deeper into the protagonist's internal conflict by metaphorically comparing his psychological state to a weather-beaten landscape that can be destroyed by external forces. This internal dialogue about passive submission and vulnerability illustrates the protagonist's struggle

with self-worth and agency. By likening himself to a sheep vulnerable to predators, he acknowledges his own perceived weakness in the face of stronger, more aggressive personalities. This internal conflict is not just about fear; it's about identity and the struggle to assert oneself against overpowering external influences. Frame writes:

I thought, if a person's psychological climate, which, I suppose, could be interpreted as his habitual method of dealing with his life, were of passive submission as mine in my short-sighted world had been, then a storm of unusual force, a combination of aggressive personalities, could wreck him, tear him to pieces like wolves descending from the mountains upon the timid sheep. (Frame 211)

The protagonist's contemplation reveals a profound internal battle between submission and the desire for self-preservation, which plays a crucial role in his psychological journey throughout the book. This analysis not only offers insight into his character but also serves as a commentary on the human experience of internal conflict and the conditions under which personal transformations occur.

Moreover, the section examines how characters' internal conflicts are exacerbated by external pressures and societal expectations. Characters may feel torn between honoring their personal truths and conforming to the expectations of others, leading to feelings of alienation or isolation. This conflict between authenticity and conformity adds layers of complexity to characters' internal struggles, highlighting the external forces that shape their sense of identity. Furthermore, the chapter analyzes the psychological and emotional toll of internal conflict on characters' well-being. As characters wrestle with conflicting memories and identities, they may experience feelings of anxiety, guilt, or shame. These internal battles not only affect characters'

individual psyches but also impact their relationships with others, as they struggle to reconcile their internal struggles with external realities.

Through close analysis of character dynamics and key moments in the narrative, this section seeks to unravel the complexities of internal conflict in "The Memorial Room." By examining the psychological and emotional dilemmas characters undergo as they grapple with conflicting memories and identities, we gain deeper insight into the human experience of navigating the complexities of self-discovery and personal growth. Ultimately, this exploration highlights the inherent tension between memory and identity and the profound impact it has on characters' inner lives.

3.4 The Influence of Time and Space on Identity

Time serves as a crucial element in shaping characters' identities, as memories of the past continue to exert influence on their present selves. Characters grapple with the passage of time, confronting the ghosts of their pasts and reckoning with the ways in which these memories have shaped who they have become. Additionally, the narrative explores how characters' perceptions of time may vary, with some characters feeling trapped in the past while others strive to embrace the present moment.

Janet Frame provides a vivid illustration of the ways in which space and atmosphere can influence one's identity and perception of self. The description of the sanctuary, marked by a rush of wind carrying dead leaves, twigs, and scraps of paper, creates an image of a place both physically and metaphorically suspended between the living and the dead. She writes:

Here, I thought, if one were a spirit or dead, is a sanctuary. With a sudden rush of wind, dead leaves, twigs and a scrap of paper blew in the door. The air of

desolation, of neglect, increased; the chill, of the wind and of the spirit, intensified and I knew the peace that is most known when walking in a cemetery, one is contained within it, withdrawn as the dead are from the world, and listening as if from a great distance to the movements and noises of the city and its people. (Frame 204)

The increasing air of desolation and intensified chill parallels the protagonist's growing sense of isolation. This setting evokes a profound peace associated with cemeteries—a place where one is physically contained and spiritually withdrawn from the everyday bustle of life. This spatial and sensory experience reflects a deeper existential withdrawal, enhancing the protagonist's introspection and shaping his identity in relation to the space he inhabits. The sanctuary thus becomes a transformative space where the boundary between self and surroundings blurs, deeply affecting his perception of self and other.

The horrifying vision of the Watercress family, the Fosters, and the Lees gathered around the deceased Rose Hurdell reveals another dimension of how time and space impact identity. This gathering in the Memorial Room, described as a pagan ceremony, underscores the idea that identity can be shaped by collective memory and the physical spaces that hold historical or emotional significance. The characters are depicted as feeding on the permanence of death, an act that both sustains their identities and binds them to a specific narrative of the past. This shared focus on Hurdell's death within a defined space suggests that identity can be constructed and reinforced through communal rituals and the physical places where these rituals occur, highlighting how collective identities are maintained through a shared historical and spatial experience.

Furthermore, the description of this assembly as a permanent storm introduces the concept of time as a force that can solidify certain aspects of identity while eroding others. The permanence

attributed to death—and the power derived from it—suggests that the characters' identities are heavily influenced by their ongoing relationship with the deceased. This dynamic indicates that identity is not static but evolves in response to the temporal contexts and the meanings ascribed to particular spaces. The storm metaphor captures the intensity and potential destructiveness of clinging to fixed identities shaped by the past, pointing to the complex interplay between time, space, and identity formation.

Moreover, the physical spaces characters inhabit play a significant role in shaping their identities. Settings within the novel, such as the titular Memorial Room or the landscapes of New Zealand, serve as repositories of memory and meaning, anchoring characters to their pasts while also providing opportunities for growth and transformation. Characters navigate these spaces, each imbued with its own history and significance, as they search for a sense of belonging and understanding of themselves. Through close analysis of character experiences and the role of time and space within the narrative, this section sheds light on the intricate ways in which memory, identity, and context intersect within "The Memorial Room." By examining how characters negotiate the complexities of time and space in shaping their identities, we gain deeper insight into the multifaceted nature of selfhood and the human experience of grappling with the past in order to navigate the present.

3.5 Conclusion

The third chapter of this thesis concludes by summarizing the key findings and insights presented in the preceding sections. It highlights the significance of memory and identity in understanding the characters and themes within *The Memorial Room*. Throughout this chapter, we have explored the evolution of identity, internal conflicts related to memory and identity, and the influence of time and space on characters' sense of self. By delving into these themes, we have gained a deeper understanding of the complexities of selfhood as portrayed in the novel, as well as the universal human experience of grappling with memory and identity. These insights pave the way for the general conclusion, where all key findings and arguments will be summarized and synthesized to provide a comprehensive overview of the research.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The exploration of *The Memorial Room* by Janet Frame within this thesis has revealed the intricate ways in which memory and identity intertwine throughout the novel, offering profound insights into the human condition. Janet Frame uses the physical setting of the Memorial Room not just as a backdrop but as a crucible for the forging of identity through the complex layers of memory and the passage of time. As the chapters of this thesis have shown, Frame's narrative is a meticulous dissection of the ways in which our memories and the spaces we inhabit shape who we are and how we perceive the world around us.

Chapter One: Unveiling Janet Frame's *The Memorial Room*, established the foundational context for understanding the novel, providing a lens through which to view Frame's personal history and its impact on her writing. The discussion illuminated how *The Memorial Room* fits within Frame's broader literary oeuvre and highlighted its unique position in discussing themes of historical significance and personal identity. This chapter set the stage for a deeper investigation into the novel's intricate treatment of memory and identity. It delved into the mechanisms through which Frame employs memory as a narrative strategy to shape and reshape her characters' identities. It was observed that memory in Frame's narrative acts both as a sanctuary and a prison, illustrating the dual nature of past experiences in forming self-concept and personal history. This chapter also explored how nostalgia acts as a force of both comfort and distortion, suggesting that our longing for the past is often intertwined with our desire to rewrite it.

The study further dissected the evolution of identity through the internal conflicts faced by the characters, driven by their memories and the changing spaces around them. The examination of how time and space influence identity underscored Frame's depiction of identity as fluid and

ever-changing, subject to the whims of memory and the environment. This chapter synthesized the novel's thematic concerns, illustrating how Frame portrays identity formation as a dynamic process shaped by internal and external forces.

Janet Frame's *In the Memorial Room* serves as a profound meditation on the ways memory interacts with space to mold personal and collective identities. Through a detailed exploration of the characters' journeys, the novel poses essential questions about the reliability of memory, the impacts of physical and emotional spaces on our sense of self, and the ways in which our identities evolve over time. Frame's narrative compels readers to consider the impermanence of memory and the fluidity of identity, challenging us to reflect on how our past, present, and the spaces we inhabit intertwine to define who we are. This thesis has not only contributed to the academic discourse on one of New Zealand's most celebrated authors but has also opened avenues for further research on the relationship between memory, identity, and space within literary studies.

The findings revealed Frame's portrayal of identity as perpetually in flux, influenced by an intricate dance of past experiences and present circumstances. The characters' identities are depicted as narratives themselves—continually written and rewritten against the backdrop of shifting memories and environments. This fluid concept of identity challenges traditional notions of a fixed self, suggesting instead that we are is an ongoing construction shaped by both memory and the physical and emotional spaces we navigate. Through *In the Memorial Room*, Frame not only enriches the literary discourse on identity and memory but also offers a lens through which readers can examine the ephemeral nature of personal and collective histories.

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Appendices

Appendices

Appendix A:

Janet Frame



Appendix B:

In The Memorial Room Book Cover

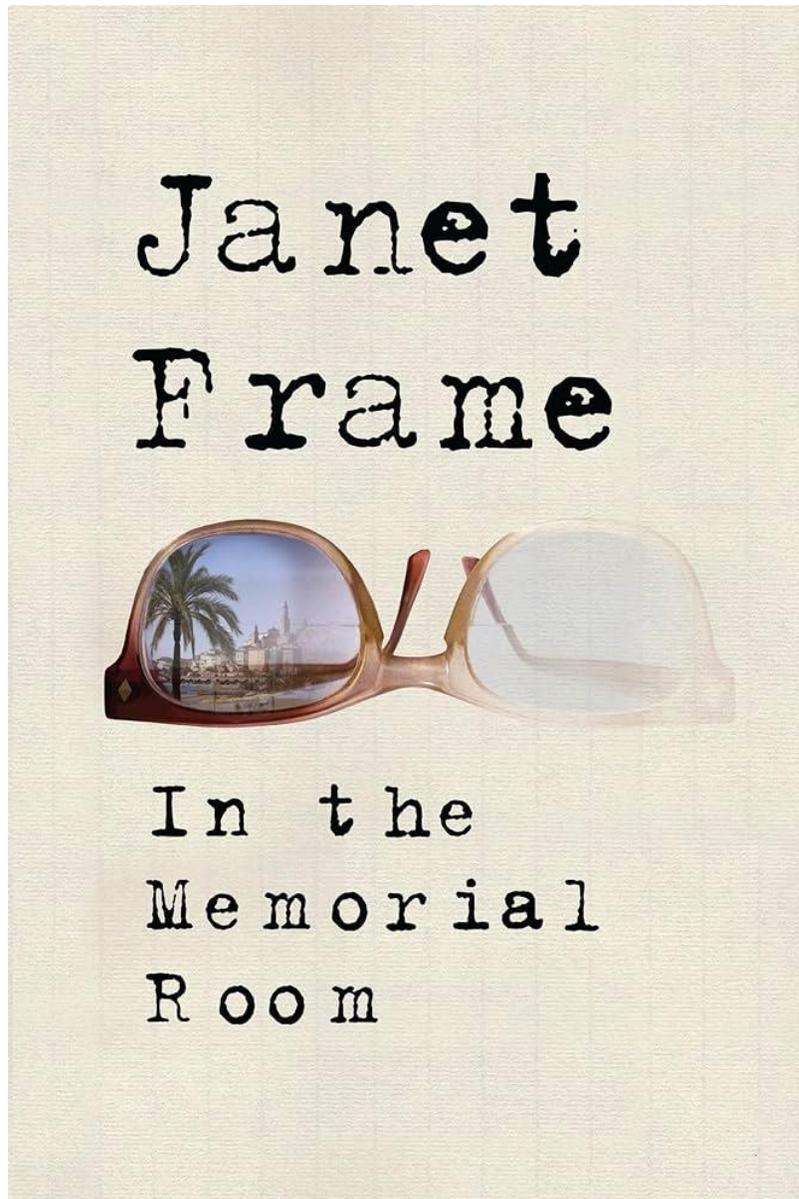


Image 2 “In The Memorial Room” Paperback

[In the Memorial Room: Janet Frame, Humphrey Bower: 9781489409447: Amazon.com: Books](https://www.amazon.com/In-the-Memorial-Room-Janet-Frame/dp/070905447X)

Glossary

Glossary

Alienation A recurring theme in the novel, alienation is experienced by the protagonist both in social contexts and within himself. It highlights the isolation that can come from a profound introspective journey into one's memories and identity.

Ancestral Echoes This concept refers to the influence of the protagonist's ancestors on his identity. Through memories, he encounters not only his own past but also those of his forebears, suggesting that identity is not merely individual but is also shaped by historical and familial legacies.

Catharsis In the novel, catharsis represents the emotional release and enlightenment the protagonist experiences as he confronts and accepts various aspects of his memories and identity. This process is crucial for his psychological healing and for achieving a reconciled sense of self.

Fragmentation It is frequently used to describe the narrative style of the book, which mirrors the protagonist's fragmented sense of self. This stylistic choice reflects how individual memories can be disjointed and nonlinear, contributing to a fractured but authentic depiction of personal history.

Identity Reconstruction This concept refers to the protagonist's ongoing process of reconstructing his identity through the memories of past experiences. As the protagonist revisits various episodes from his life, he reassesses and sometimes reshapes his sense of self based on new interpretations of old memories.

Memoryscape This term combines 'memory' and 'landscape' to describe the way the protagonist navigates through his past, illustrating how memories shape and are integrated into one's identity. The novel often portrays memory as a physical space that can be traversed, revealing hidden truths about oneself and others.

Temporal Fluidity This term describes the fluid nature of time in the novel, where past, present, and future often merge or intersect. This fluidity underscores the complex relationship between memory and identity, suggesting that our understanding of the past is constantly evolving.

ملخص

تستكشف هذه الأطروحة الديناميكيات المعقدة بين الذاكرة الفردية والهوية ضمن سياق الهياكل الاجتماعية والثقافية كما تم تصويرها في رواية جانيت فريم. ومن خلال استخدام منهجية بحث نسوية ونوعية، تحلل هذه الدراسة كيف يعكس تصوير الرواية للشخصيات والبنية السردية التأثيرات المجتمعية الأوسع على تكوين الهوية الشخصية.

تنقسم الأطروحة إلى ثلاثة فصول رئيسية تبني بالتسلسل فهماً لاستكشاف فريم للذاكرة والهوية من خلال الأدوات الأدبية والنقد الاجتماعي والثقافي. تؤكد نتائج هذه الأطروحة على ارتباط الرواية العميق بموضوعات الذاكرة والهوية، مما يشير إلى أن هذه العناصر تتشكل ديناميكياً من خلال البيئات الاجتماعية للشخصيات وخلفياتها الثقافية.

تعتبر غرفة فريم التذكارية بمثابة دراسة حالة أدبية مؤثرة لفحص سيولة الهوية والتأثير المنتشر للذاكرة على المستويين الشخصي والمجتمعي. لا تساهم هذه الدراسة في النقد الأدبي لعمل جانيت فريم فحسب، بل تثري أيضاً الخطاب الاجتماعي حول كيفية عكس الأدب وانتقاده للبناء المجتمعي للهوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النسوية، الذاكرة، الهوية، أدب ما بعد الحرب النيوزيلندي، المقاربات الاجتماعية للأدب