

REMEMBERING AS RESISTANCE: ETHICAL MEMORY IN OLD GOD'S TIME

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the concept of ethical memory in *Old God's Time* by Sebastian Barry. It argues that memory in the novel is not a stable or simple recall of past events but an active, unstable, and morally charged force that continuously shapes the present. Ethical memory is understood in this study as a form of remembering that carries responsibility toward truth, suffering, and hidden histories especially those erased or silenced by institutions. The study focuses on how the novel presents memory as fragmented, intrusive, and emotionally overwhelming. The protagonist does not experience memory as a clear narrative of the past but as sudden returns of images, feelings, and partial recollections. These memories disturb his present life and create a constant sense of psychological pressure. Aging intensifies this condition, as the weight of lived experience becomes heavier and more difficult to contain. In this way, memory is not only personal but also ethical, because it forces confrontation with unresolved pain and moral conflict. The article also examines how the novel reveals institutional violence and systemic silence. It suggests that institutions such as religious and state structures often suppress uncomfortable truths, particularly those related to abuse and moral failure. Within this context, ethical memory becomes a form of resistance, as it refuses to allow silence to erase suffering. Memory becomes a space where hidden histories reappear and demand recognition. Finally, the article connects ethical memory with trauma theory and trans modernist thinking. While memory is fragmented and unstable, it still carries moral meaning and the possibility of truth. The study concludes that remembering in the novel is not only a psychological process but also an ethical act that challenges forgetting, exposes injustice, and resists institutional erasure.

Keywords: Ethical Memory; Trauma; Institutional Violence; Haunting; Resistance; Memory Studies; Trans modernism

1 INTRODUCTION

Memory is one of the most complex and unstable elements of human experience. It is not only a mental record of past events but also a continuous process that shapes identity, emotions, and moral understanding in the present. In literary studies, memory is often

represented as fragmented, emotional, and unpredictable. It does not remain fixed in the past but returns in unexpected forms, especially in narratives dealing with trauma, loss, and institutional violence. In such contexts, memory becomes more than a psychological function; it becomes an ethical responsibility. This article

focuses on the idea of ethical memory in *Old God's Time* by Sebastian Barry. The novel presents memory as a disturbing and persistent force that cannot be controlled or fully understood by the individual. Instead of forming a clear and linear narrative of the past, memory appears in fragmented images, emotional disturbances, and repeated mental returns. These memories shape the protagonist's present life and create a constant tension between what is remembered and what is suppressed.

The central argument of this study is that ethical memory in the novel functions as a form of resistance. It resists silence, institutional forgetting, and the suppression of uncomfortable truths. Memory is not presented as a passive recollection but as an active moral force that demands recognition of hidden suffering. In this way, remembering becomes an ethical act because it confronts injustice and refuses to allow the past to disappear quietly.

The novel is deeply concerned with themes of institutional violence, moral failure, and psychological trauma. It reveals how institutions that are meant to protect society such as religious systems, law enforcement structures, and social authorities can also become spaces of concealment and harm. Within these systems, silence often plays a powerful role. Silence protects institutions from accountability, while victims are left with fragmented and unresolved memories. Ethical memory challenges this silence by bringing suppressed experiences back into awareness.

Another important aspect of the novel is the relationship between memory and aging. The protagonist carries the weight of his past experiences into old age, where memories become more intrusive and difficult to manage. Aging does not weaken memory; instead, it intensifies it. The past appears more frequently, often without warning, and shapes emotional and psychological reality. This suggests that memory is not something that fades over time but something that becomes heavier and more demanding.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from memory studies and trauma theory. Scholars of trauma argue that traumatic experiences are not fully processed at the moment of occurrence but return later in

fragmented and repetitive forms. This understanding helps explain why memory in the novel is not linear or stable but disruptive and recurring. Ethical memory, in this sense, is closely connected to trauma because it involves confronting experiences that resist closure and demand continuous recognition.

In addition to trauma theory, the article also engages with ethical philosophy, particularly ideas that link memory to responsibility. Memory is not only about recalling events but also about acknowledging suffering and injustice. When memory involves experiences of violence or institutional failure, it becomes a moral obligation rather than a neutral cognitive process. Ethical memory therefore operates at the intersection of psychology, ethics, and history.

The significance of studying ethical memory in this novel lies in its broader cultural and social implications. It reflects how societies deal with difficult histories, especially those involving abuse, silence, and institutional power. By examining memory as resistance, the article highlights how literature can expose hidden truths and challenge dominant narratives. It also shows how personal memory can become a site of collective meaning, where individual experiences reflect larger social and historical realities.

Finally, this introduction positions ethical memory as a key concept for understanding the novel's deeper structure. Memory is not simply a background element in the story; it is the central force that drives narrative, emotion, and moral reflection. Through fragmented recollections and haunting returns of the past, the novel suggests that remembering is both painful and necessary. It is painful because it confronts loss and violence; it is necessary because it preserves truth and resists erasure. In this way, the article argues that ethical memory in *Old God's Time* functions as a form of resistance against silence, forgetting, and institutional denial, transforming memory into an ongoing ethical engagement with the past.

2 Literature Review

The concept of memory has been widely discussed across philosophy, trauma studies, and cultural theory. In contemporary literary criticism, memory is no longer understood as a

stable archive of the past but as an active, socially shaped, and ethically charged process. In relation to *Old God's Time* by Sebastian Barry, this study builds on existing scholarship that connects memory with trauma, ethics, and institutional violence. The following literature review is organized under three subheadings.

2.1 Memory, Trauma, and Ethical Responsibility

One of the strongest foundations for understanding ethical memory comes from philosophical and trauma theory perspectives. Paul Ricoeur, in *Memory, History, forgetting* (2004), argues that memory is deeply connected with justice and truth. For Ricoeur, remembering is not a neutral act but an ethical responsibility because it involves confronting the reality of past suffering and resisting forgetting. Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), emphasizes that ethics begins with responsibility toward the Other. This idea extends to memory studies by suggesting that remembering another person's suffering is itself an ethical obligation. Memory, in this sense, becomes a moral relation rather than a purely psychological process.

In trauma theory, Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), explains that traumatic experience is not fully processed at the moment of occurrence but returns later in fragmented and repetitive forms. This concept is crucial for understanding ethical memory because it shows that unresolved trauma continuously demands attention and recognition. Together, these scholars establish the idea that memory is not passive but ethically active. It requires engagement, acknowledgment, and responsibility toward past suffering.

2.2 Institutional Silence and Cultural Memory

Another important area of scholarship focuses on how institutions shape, control, or suppress memory. Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), argues that institutions such as prisons, hospitals, and religious systems control knowledge and truth through systems of power. In this sense, memory is not only personal but also politically regulated.

Pierre Nora, in his influential essay "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*" (1989), introduces the concept of sites of memory (*lieux de mémoire*), arguing that modern societies preserve memory through symbolic locations and cultural narratives. However, he also notes that real lived memory is often replaced by constructed or institutionalized versions of history.

Similarly, Jan Assmann, in *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (2011), explains that cultural memory is maintained through institutions, rituals, and collective narratives, but these systems can also lead to selective remembering and forgetting. This selective memory often silences uncomfortable or traumatic histories. These theoretical perspectives are important for understanding institutional silence in literary texts. In relation to ethical memory, they show how institutions may suppress truth, making personal remembrance a form of resistance against official forgetting.

2.3 Memory in Contemporary Trauma Fiction

In literary studies, trauma fiction has become a key field for analyzing fragmented and non-linear representations of memory. Anne Whitehead, in *Trauma Fiction* (2004), argues that trauma fiction often uses repetition, fragmentation, and temporal disruption to represent the instability of traumatic memory. Dominick LaCapra, in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through" trauma, suggesting that unresolved trauma returns in repetitive and disruptive forms. This theoretical approach helps explain why literary characters often experience memory as haunting rather than structured recollection.

Marianne Hirsch, in *The Generation of Post memory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (2012), introduces the concept of post memory, which refers to the transmission of trauma across generations. This expands memory beyond individual experience and connects it to collective and inherited histories. Within this literary framework, *Old God's Time* fits strongly into the tradition of trauma fiction. The novel represents memory as fragmented,

intrusive, and emotionally charged. It also reflects broader social and institutional histories of silence and violence. However, while existing research has explored trauma and narrative form in Barry's work, fewer studies focus specifically on ethical memory as a form of resistance. This article contributes to this gap by arguing that memory in the novel is not only psychological but also ethical and resistant, challenging institutional forgetting and moral silence.

3 Theoretical Framework

This article builds its theoretical framework through three main perspectives: the ethical philosophy of memory, trauma and psychoanalytic approaches to memory fragmentation, and cultural-institutional theories of collective memory. These perspectives are used to analyze how ethical memory functions in *Old God's Time* by Sebastian Barry. In the novel, memory is not presented as a stable record of the past but as an unstable, intrusive, and morally demanding experience. It constantly interrupts the present and forces confrontation with hidden histories of violence, silence, and institutional failure.

3.1 Ethical Memory and Moral Responsibility

Ethical memory is grounded in the idea that remembering is not only a cognitive act but also a moral obligation. Memory becomes ethical when it involves responsibility toward truth, suffering, and historical injustice. One of the most influential thinkers in this regard is Paul Ricoeur, who, in *Memory, History, forgetting* (2004), argues that memory is always tied to justice and that remembering responsibly is necessary for moral understanding of the past. For Ricoeur, memory is never neutral because it involves interpretation, selection, and ethical positioning.

Extending this idea, Emmanuel Levinas, in *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1969), emphasizes that ethics originates in responsibility toward the Other. This suggests that memory is not only self-directed but also relational. Remembering the suffering of others becomes an ethical act because it acknowledges their vulnerability and prevents their erasure. Building on this ethical dimension, Avishai Margalit, in *The Ethics of Memory* (2002),

argues that a morally decent society is one that does not systematically forget humiliation, violence, or injustice. His concept of the moral witness highlights that memory is essential for justice, especially in contexts where institutions attempt to erase or sanitize the past. Similarly, Jeffrey Blustein, in *The Moral Demands of Memory* (2008), argues that individuals and societies have duties to remember morally significant past events, especially those involving harm. Forgetting such events can lead to repeated injustice and ethical blindness. Together, these thinkers frame ethical memory as a moral responsibility that resists forgetting and demands recognition of suffering.

3.2 Trauma, Fragmentation, and the Return of the Repressed

Trauma theory provides a crucial lens for understanding how memory operates in literary texts as fragmented, repetitive, and intrusive. Trauma is not experienced as a fully conscious event but returns later in disrupted and often uncontrollable forms. Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), explains that trauma is characterized by delayed understanding, where the mind fails to fully process the event at the moment of occurrence, resulting in its repeated return. This idea is further developed by Dominick LaCapra, who, in *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (2001), distinguishes between "acting out" and "working through." Acting out refers to compulsive repetition of traumatic memories, while working through involves reflective distance and partial resolution.

Sigmund Freud's concept of repetition compulsion, discussed in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), also provides an important foundation for understanding trauma. Freud suggests that individuals unconsciously repeat traumatic experiences because they cannot fully integrate them into conscious memory. This explains why traumatic memory appears as fragmented images, sensations, and emotional disturbances. In addition, Dori Laub, in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), emphasizes the importance of testimony in trauma narratives, arguing that traumatic memory requires witnessing in order to be acknowledged. Without witnessing, trauma remains

unprocessed and continues to return in distorted forms.

3.3 Cultural Memory, Institutions, and Power Structures

Memory is also shaped by cultural, political, and institutional frameworks. Maurice Halbwachs argues that memory is always socially framed, meaning that individual recollections are shaped by group identities, cultural norms, and social structures. Jan Assmann expands this idea by distinguishing between communicative memory (everyday lived memory) and cultural memory (institutionalized and symbolic memory). Cultural memory is preserved through texts, rituals, and institutions, but it also involves selection, exclusion, and reinterpretation of the past.

Pierre Nora introduces the concept of lieux de mémoire (sites of memory), arguing that modern societies replace living memory with symbolic representations such as monuments, archives, and historical narratives. However, these representations often simplify or distort complex historical realities. From a more critical perspective, Michel Foucault shows how institutions regulate knowledge and truth through power relations. According to Foucault, what is considered truth is shaped by institutional systems such as law, religion, and medicine. Adding to this perspective, Aleida Assmann highlights the tension between remembering and forgetting in cultural systems, arguing that societies actively suppress uncomfortable or traumatic histories while preserving official narratives. Within this theoretical context, institutional silence becomes a form of power, and ethical memory therefore emerges as resistance against these controlling structures, insisting on the recovery of suppressed histories.

By combining ethical philosophy, trauma theory, and cultural memory studies, this article develops a comprehensive framework for analyzing ethical memory in *Old God's Time*. Ethical philosophy explains memory as responsibility and moral obligation. Trauma theory explains its fragmented, repetitive, and intrusive nature. Cultural memory theory explains how institutions shape, regulate, and suppress remembrance. Within this integrated framework, ethical memory is understood as a multidimensional phenomenon: psychological,

social, political, and ethical. In this way, memory in the novel is not simply a narrative device but a critical force that exposes hidden violence, challenges institutional authority, and transforms remembering into an act of resistance and moral engagement.

3.4 Ethical Memory and Institutional Violence

This section analyzes how ethical memory operates as a form of resistance against institutional violence in *Old God's Time*. The novel presents memory not as a stable narrative but as a disturbing and recurring force that exposes hidden histories of abuse, silence, and moral collapse. The protagonist's memories are fragmented, emotionally charged, and often painful, showing that the past is not over but continues to exist in the present.

3.5 Institutional Violence and the Ethics of Silence

One of the strongest aspects of the novel is its exposure of institutional violence, especially within religious and state systems. The line "The wretchedness of things, the filthy dark, the violence. Priests' hands. The silence" clearly connects violence with authority and silence. The reference to priests' hands suggests institutional abuse hidden under religious legitimacy. The most important word here is silence, which functions not as absence but as active suppression. Silence becomes a system of protection for institutions and a form of erasure for victims.

This aligns with Michel Foucault's idea, presented in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977), that institutions control truth through power. In the novel, silence is not accidental; it is structured and maintained. Ethical memory directly challenges this silence by refusing to allow institutional narratives to become final truth. Avishai Margalit, in *The Ethics of Memory* (2002), supports this interpretation by arguing that a decent society must not forget victims of humiliation and suffering.

3.6 Memory as Fragmented Testimony and Psychological Rupture

The novel represents memory as fragmented and intrusive rather than linear. One of the most

powerful images is: "The reports floating in his mind like squabs, flapping their wings, begging for attention. Feed us, feed us, bring us worms." This metaphor presents memory as living and demanding. The reports are not passive records; they behave like living creatures that demand recognition. This connects strongly with Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma (1996), which argues that traumatic memory returns in fragmented and repetitive forms.

Another important textual moment is: "Memories were lying in ambush everywhere." This line shows that memory is unpredictable and constantly present. The idea of ambush reflects trauma's sudden and uncontrollable return, a phenomenon Dominick LaCapra (2001) describes as the state of acting out, where the past is repeated without resolution. Sigmund Freud's concept of repetition compulsion (1920) also helps explain this pattern, as Freud argues that traumatic experiences are repeated unconsciously because they cannot be fully processed.

3.7 Emotional Memory, Aging, and Psychological Isolation

The novel also connects memory with aging and emotional isolation. The line "The burden of getting older was borne alone" suggests that memory becomes heavier with age. Aging is not only physical decline but also emotional accumulation. The protagonist carries memories that cannot be shared or fully expressed, reflecting Paul Ricoeur's idea (2004) that memory is tied to identity and interpretation. Another emotional passage states: "Not a tear on her cheeks, as if she were far beyond tears. The tears of a little girl. The dry, cool face of his wife." This shows emotional fragmentation in which childhood trauma is still present but no longer visibly expressed. Dori Laub, in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (1992), argues that trauma requires witnessing for emotional processing. Without recognition or testimony, trauma remains internalized and unresolved.

3.8 Institutional Truth Versus Ethical Memory

The novel also contrasts institutional systems of truth with emotional and ethical memory. The line "But the forensic was impartial, impersonal,

elegant really" represents modern institutional methods of truth-making. Forensic systems rely on objectivity and detachment. However, the word elegant suggests emotional distance rather than full understanding. Dominick LaCapra (2001) argues that historical understanding requires both factual accuracy and emotional engagement. Without emotional recognition, truth remains incomplete. Ethical memory fills this gap by preserving emotional and subjective experience.

3.9 Ethical Memory as Resistance Against Institutional Erasure

The most important function of memory in the novel is resistance. The key line "The real stories of the world were bedded in silence" suggests that truth is hidden beneath institutional and social silence. The real stories are not officially recorded; they exist beneath dominant narratives. Maurice Halbwachs, in *On Collective Memory* (1992), explains that memory is socially shaped, meaning that institutions influence what is remembered and what is forgotten. Jan Assmann (2011) further argues that cultural memory is selective and often excludes painful histories. Ethical memory challenges this selective memory by bringing hidden trauma into visibility, refusing to allow silence to become final truth.

3.10 Haunting and Trauma in Old God's Time

This section examines how haunting and trauma operate as central mechanisms of memory in the novel. Old God's Time does not present trauma as a completed past event but as a continuous presence that returns in fragments, emotional disturbances, and intrusive recollections. In this sense, haunting becomes the literary form through which ethical memory is expressed. The past does not disappear; it lingers, interrupts, and reshapes the present.

3.11 Trauma as Repetition and Psychological Disruption

In the novel, trauma is experienced as repetition rather than linear recall. The protagonist does not recall events calmly or in order; instead, the past returns unexpectedly in emotional and fragmented forms. The metaphor of memory as "reports floating in his mind like squabs,

flapping their wings, begging for attention" shows trauma as something alive and restless. The repetition of "feed us" suggests that traumatic memory requires acknowledgment and cannot be ignored or suppressed. This aligns with Cathy Caruth's theory (1996), which explains that traumatic experiences are not fully processed at the moment of occurrence. Dominick LaCapra (2001) further explains this through the concept of acting out, where traumatic memory is repeatedly relived without resolution.

3.12 Haunting as the Return of the Past

"Memories were lying in ambush everywhere" captures this experience precisely. The phrase lying in ambush suggests that memory is unpredictable and constantly waiting to reappear, creating a sense of psychological instability where the boundary between past and present becomes blurred. Avery Gordon, in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997), argues that haunting is a social experience where suppressed histories return in subtle but persistent ways. Jacques Derrida's concept of hauntology, developed in *Specters of Marx* (1994), also supports this interpretation, arguing that the past exists as a spectral presence that never fully disappears.

3.13 Emotional Memory and Fragmentation of Identity

Trauma in the novel is also deeply emotional and affects identity formation. The contrast in "Not a tear on her cheeks, as if she were far beyond tears. The tears of a little girl. The dry, cool face of his wife" indicates that suffering has been internalized rather than expressed. Judith Herman, in *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), explains that trauma often leads to emotional numbing and disconnection. Dori Laub (1992) further emphasizes that trauma requires witnessing in order to be fully processed. Without recognition or testimony, trauma remains fragmented and continues to exist internally without resolution.

3.14 Haunting, Memory, and the Ethics of the Past

Haunting in the novel is not only psychological but also ethical. It raises questions about

responsibility toward the past and its unresolved suffering. The persistent return of memory suggests that the past demands recognition and cannot simply be forgotten. Avery Gordon (1997) argues that haunting is a form of social memory where suppressed histories return to demand attention. Dominick LaCapra (2001) argues that ethical memory requires engaging with trauma rather than avoiding it. His concept of working through is important here: haunting is a reminder that unresolved histories continue to demand ethical attention, and that memory in the novel functions as both psychological disturbance and ethical demand.

3.15 Transmodernism and Resistance

This section explores how the concept of transmodernism helps to understand ethical memory as a form of resistance in *Old God's Time*. While trauma theory explains the fragmented and repetitive nature of memory, transmodern thinking goes further by suggesting that fragmentation does not only represent breakdown but can also become a site of ethical reconstruction. In this sense, memory is not only a return of pain but also a possibility of meaning, responsibility, and resistance.

3.16 From Postmodern Fragmentation to Transmodern Meaning

Postmodern theory often emphasizes fragmentation, uncertainty, and the collapse of stable truths. However, transmodernism moves beyond this position by reintroducing ethical responsibility, relational meaning, and global awareness into fragmented experience. In the context of the novel, memory is fragmented and unstable, but it is not meaningless. Instead, it becomes a medium through which hidden truths of violence, silence, and institutional failure are revealed. Raimon Panikkar, in *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (1978), emphasizes intercultural dialogue and holistic understanding of reality. Applied to the novel, fragmented memories can still form a meaningful ethical structure when they are acknowledged rather than suppressed.

3.17 Memory as Ethical Reconstruction

In *Old God's Time*, memory repeatedly appears in broken and intrusive forms. However, transmodernism allows us to see these fragments

not as failure but as ethical material that demands reconstruction. The line "The real stories of the world were bedded in silence" highlights this condition clearly. Ziauddin Sardar, in *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture* (1998), argues that knowledge must move beyond rigid binaries and engage with complexity, plurality, and ethical responsibility. In this way, memory becomes a form of reconstruction rather than destruction, bringing together fragmented experiences into a moral understanding of suffering, silence, and institutional failure.

3.18 Resistance Through Ethical Memory

Resistance in the novel does not appear as physical rebellion but as psychological and ethical refusal to forget. Memory itself becomes the act of resistance. The continuous return of traumatic memories prevents closure and challenges institutional attempts to silence or erase the past. Avery Gordon (1997) argues that suppressed histories return to demand recognition, and in a similar way, the protagonist's memories refuse to disappear. Judith Butler, in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), provides a useful framework through her idea of precarious life, where recognition of vulnerability becomes an ethical and political act. The novel shows that institutional systems often rely on silence to maintain authority; however, ethical memory disrupts this structure by continuously bringing back what has been suppressed.

3.19 Transmodern Ethics and the Reclaiming of Voice

Transmodernism emphasizes relational ethics, where meaning is created through responsibility toward others and toward hidden or marginalized experiences. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (2014), argues that modern knowledge systems often create epistemologies of silence, where certain forms of knowledge and experience are excluded. The novel reflects this condition through its portrayal of institutional silence surrounding abuse and moral failure. Raimon Panikkar's idea of relational reality, developed in *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (1993), suggests that

truth is not singular but relational and emerges through engagement with multiple perspectives. In the novel, memory becomes relational because it connects personal trauma with institutional history and collective silence.

Transmodernism provides a useful framework for understanding how ethical memory operates as resistance in *Old God's Time*. While trauma theory explains fragmentation and repetition, transmodern thinking reveals how these fragments can still carry ethical meaning and reconstruct moral awareness. The novel suggests that memory is not only a site of suffering but also a site of resistance and ethical reconstruction. Through fragmented recollections, haunting returns, and suppressed histories, memory challenges institutional silence and reclaims hidden truths. In this way, transmodernism transforms memory from a condition of breakdown into a space of ethical possibility, where remembering becomes an act of resistance, responsibility, and moral engagement.

4 Conclusion

This article has explored the concept of ethical memory in *Old God's Time* by Sebastian Barry, arguing that memory in the novel functions as a deeply moral, psychological, and political force. Rather than operating as a simple recollection of past events, memory appears as fragmented, intrusive, and emotionally charged. It continuously returns in the present, shaping identity and exposing hidden histories of violence, silence, and institutional failure. In this sense, ethical memory becomes not only a way of remembering but also a way of resisting forgetting and confronting injustice.

The analysis has shown that the protagonist's memories are not linear or stable but fragmented and haunting. They appear as emotional disturbances, sudden images, and repetitive psychological returns. These memories are closely linked to trauma, which prevents closure and creates a continuous sense of psychological tension. As discussed through trauma theory, memory in the novel reflects the idea that the past is never fully past; instead, it remains active within the present, shaping perception and emotional reality.

A central argument developed throughout the article is that memory in the novel carries ethical

weight. It demands recognition of suffering that has been hidden or suppressed by institutional structures. The discussion of institutional violence highlights how systems of authority particularly religious and state institutions can produce silence around abuse and moral failure. Within this context, ethical memory becomes a form of resistance that challenges institutional forgetting and refuses to allow silence to become final truth.

The study also demonstrated that memory in the novel is not only psychological but also cultural and political. Drawing on cultural memory theory, it was shown that institutions play a key role in shaping what is remembered and what is erased. However, the novel disrupts this process by bringing back suppressed histories in fragmented but persistent forms. These returns of memory function as ethical interruptions that challenge official narratives and expose hidden realities.

Furthermore, by applying transmodernist thought, the article has argued that fragmentation in memory does not only represent breakdown but also opens a space for ethical reconstruction. Even though memory is unstable and incomplete, it still carries meaning and responsibility. Transmodernism allows us to see these fragments as part of a larger ethical process in which remembering becomes an act of reconstruction, connection, and moral awareness rather than mere disintegration.

Across all theoretical perspectives ethical philosophy, trauma studies, cultural memory, and transmodernism the central finding remains consistent: memory in *Old God's Time* is fundamentally ethical. It is not passive or neutral but active and demanding. It insists on recognition of suffering, exposes institutional silence, and resists the erasure of painful histories. Ultimately, the novel suggests that forgetting is never innocent. Silence often protects systems of power, while memory disrupts that protection by bringing hidden truths into visibility. Ethical memory, therefore, becomes a form of resistance that transforms personal suffering into moral testimony. It connects individual experience with collective history and forces readers to confront uncomfortable truths about violence, authority, and silence.

In conclusion, this study has shown that ethical memory is central to understanding the emotional, narrative, and philosophical structure of the novel. Through its fragmented recollections and haunting returns, the text demonstrates that remembering is both painful and necessary. It is painful because it reopens wounds of trauma and loss, but it is necessary because it preserves truth and resists institutional forgetting. In this way, ethical memory becomes both a form of survival and a form of resistance, making it the core interpretive lens for reading *Old God's Time*.

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