



University of Tehran press

Research in Contemporary World Literature

http://jor.ut.ac.ir, Email: pajuhesh@ut.ac.ir

p-ISSN : 2588-4131 e-ISSN: 2588 -7092

Agential Memory in Contemporary Irish Identity Formation in John Banville's The Sea

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Article Info	Extended ABSTRACT
<p>Article type: Research Article</p> <p>Article history: Received: 28 December 2022 Received in revised form: 15 February 2023 Accepted: 14 March 2023 Published online: Autumn 2024</p> <p>Keywords: agential memory, contemporary Irish identity, The Sea, John Banville, Karen Barad, agential realism.</p>	<p>This article investigates the concept of agential memory in John Banville's <i>The Sea</i> (2005). Agential realism is a concept developed by the American philosopher physicist Karen Barad in order to postulate a new model for defining epistemology, ontology, and ethics. The reason for positing such a model for memory is that memory loses its conventional function in <i>The Sea</i>, and instead, memory's interaction with natural elements forms a special bond between the subject and the object, which the humanist conception of memory cannot explain. Thus, based on Barad's agential realist model, this article creates and posits an agential memory to understand the workings of memory both in the humans and the objects. How memory is retrieved to connect the past with the present and even the future, how memories are relived and sometimes intermingled with imagination, and how agential memory works as a way toward Irish identity formation in <i>The Sea</i> are examined in this study. In his interviews, Banville professes that he is a post-humanist because he believes that the human is not the only center in the universe. His interest in Copernicus, Kepler, and decentering theories encourage him to search for innovative ways of writing and breaking the old forms. Thus, this novel way of writing is interrelated with mnemonic structures. In order to break the old forms, Banville distributes memory in the scope of <i>The Sea</i>, which contains not only the human subject but also objects and the natural environment. Accordingly, in order to examine the structure of memory in <i>The Sea</i>, the old-fashioned means of the humanistic approach cannot be applied. Therefore, by disregarding the humanistic approach, the article utilizes a post-humanistic approach in order to analyze memory. <i>The Sea</i> is significant in memory studies both because of the author's awareness and knowledge of modern physics and philosophy and positing a new hypothesis in memory studies. Thus, the questions with regard to <i>The Sea</i> will be as follows: Would the traditional humanistic approach, from which most theories stem, be able to respond to the postmodern deconstructive ways in examining memory? If the humanistic approach is dismissed, which approach will be valid for the examination of memory in <i>The Sea</i>? To what extent could the post-humanistic approach analyze memory in <i>The Sea</i>? And to what extent does the proposed approach in the article, which is based on the agential realist theory of Karen Barad, succeed in determining and analyzing the memory in <i>The Sea</i>?</p>

Cite this article: Shahi Gharehaghaji, Hadi. "Agential Memory in Contemporary Irish Identity Formation in John Banville's *The Sea* " *Research in Contemporary World Literature*, 2024, 29 (2), 387-411. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2023.352961.2373>.



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Publisher: University of Tehran Press.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.22059/jor.2023.352961.2373>.