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Literature, Geography and The Poetics of Space

Tracing Historical Narratives Across Literary Landscapes

Sara Ansaloni & Eleonora Gioia (Eds.)

2. Verbal Semantics and Memory in Shaping Narrative Space: Identity and Recollection in *My Name is Asher Lev*

Matteo Bona¹

Abstract

This chapter explores the interplay between memory, recall, and identity perception through spatial depiction in Chaim Potok's novel *My Name is Asher Lev*, contextualizing the semantic codification of memory as seen in the comparison of Indo-European derivations with Proto-Semitic roots. The primary objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how the underlying values within the verbal class related to memory semantics influence spatial perception, representation, and the dynamics of the novel's creative ecology. To fulfill and validate this research hypothesis, a strictly linguistic-typological method was employed, analyzing key idiomatic branches from Indo-European to Romance languages in relation to core Semitic languages, alongside a narratological and geocritical analysis of Potok's work.

This study reveals that the verbal semantic values associated with memory

¹ *Department of Humanities, University of Eastern Piedmont, matte97bona@gmail.com*



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in Indo-European languages maintain a strictly teleological aspect in their verbal classes, with Romance branches preserving a directional prepositional system. In contrast, Semitic languages assign a strongly deontic charge to the verbal classes related to memory. In relation to Potok's novel, understanding the construction of space and spatial perception within the Hasidic Jewish community directly stems from an understanding of the semantic value shaping mnemonic discourse.

Following this, an examination will address how the deontic values of memory interact with narrative loci as vehicles for geographic recollection in identity formation.

Keywords: *Chaim Potok, Geocriticism, Humanistic geography, Spatial turn, memory, literary criticism, Asher Lev, textual analysis, linguistic typology, synchronic typology*



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