



Ain Shams University

Faculty of Education

Department of English

Memory in the Hybrid Literary Text:

With Special Reference to Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*, and Nathalie Handal's *The Lives of Rain*

A Dissertation

**Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Ph.D.
in Teacher Preparation (English Literature)**

Submitted By

Hala Mahmoud Mohammad Harby

Under the Supervision of

Prof. Shokry A. M. Megahed Dr. Mona Salah El Din Hassanein

Prof. of English Language and Literature

Assistant Prof. of English Language and Literature

Department of English

Department of English

Faculty of Education

Faculty of Education

Ain Shams University

Ain Shams University

2020

Table of Contents

Contents

	Pages
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Preface.....	vi
Chapter One:	
Memory Studies and Hybridity in the Post-Colonial Context	1
Chapter Two:	
Myth as Collective Memory in Wole Soyinka's <i>Death and the King's Horseman</i>	48
Chapter Three:	
Memory as a Palimpsest in Ahdaf Soueif's <i>The Map of Love</i>.	88
Chapter Four:	
Memory and the Global Gathering in Nathalie Handal's <i>The Lives of Rain</i>.	136
Conclusion.....	205
Works Cited.....	214
Arabic Summary.....	1
Arabic Abstract.....	2

Abstract

Abstract

This dissertation aims at answering the question: why does the writer of the hybrid literary text recall the collective memory of his/her nation while he/she is addressing a foreign audience? This is a cross-generic study that examines the relevance of memory through ‘memory studies’ and New Historicism which immersed in the postcolonial context. These hybrid literary texts are essentially concerned with the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Every text from the three selected deals with memory in a particular way; Wole Soyinka resorts to myths, Soueif calls for *mezzaterra* and Handal prepares the readers for her project of global gathering. In these texts the revealing of memory is oriented to the English reader, though they discuss the collective memory of each writer’s nation (Nigeria for Soyinka, Egypt for Soueif, and Palestine as well as other nations for Handal). In all three texts, I contend that memory substitutes official history. The texts depict the lives of the ordinary people, give voice to the voiceless where memory/history from below is shared by the whole society in ‘a marketplace.’

Keywords: Memory-Memory Studies, history from below, memory as a marketplace, New Historicism, and the hybrid literary text.

Acknowledgements

- I am greatly indebted to my supervisor Dr. Shokry A.M. Megahed for his encouragement and practical advice. Dr. Megahed has been always there to listen, to give advice and to put me on the right track.
- I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my co-supervisor, Dr. Mona Salah El Din Hassanein for her insightful remarks on my work. I am deeply grateful for her distinctive criticism at the different stages of my research.

Preface

The purpose of this study is to search behind the reasons why the writers of the hybrid literary text reveal the collective memories of their nations to English audiences.

The main focus of this study is on 'Memory Studies' as an approach linked to New Historicism in the postcolonial context. 'Memory studies' with its terms 'history from below'/micro history, history from within and memory as a marketplace sheds light on the unofficial history, the history of the ordinary people and the marginalized groups in the postcolonial era. It is re-writing history and re-writing the self. History from below is one of the most recent debates in postcolonial literature; it is the re-writing of history from the viewpoint of the other, the marginalized and the peripheries of the metropolitan centres. Also, memory as a marketplace pursues solidarity among the marginalized and the victims of colonisation where individual and collective memories meet and mix.

The writers of the hybrid literary text are the offspring of the 'third space' the ambivalent area, in Homi Bhabha's term; the *mezzattera*, in Ahdaf Soueif's word and 'the voyage in,' to use Edward Said's phrase. The non-English writers address English audience in the metropolitan, while they are obsessed with the collective memory of their nations. Their texts re-write history from the viewpoint of 'the loser' and the subalterns.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters and a conclusion as follows:

Chapter one: Memory Studies and Hybridity in the Post-colonial Context

As a theoretical framework of the thesis, this chapter focuses on the terms: memory, Memory Studies with its notions of micro history/ history from below, and 'marketplace' in relation to the broader context of New Historicism as an outstanding feature of the postcolonial context. Also, this chapter explores the main characteristics of the hybrid literary text/the postcolonial text.

Chapter Two: Myth as Collective Memory in Wole Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

This chapter is devoted to Soyinka's theatre and in particular his play *Death and the King's Horseman*. It examines how Soyinka utilises myths as collective memory to gather the postcolonial fragmented Nigeria.

Chapter Three: Memory as a palimpsest in Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love*.

This chapter traces the notion 'palimpsest' as one of the main characteristics of the hybrid literary text. The chapter also delineates how Soueif mixes a palimpsest with her project of *mezzaterra* i.e. the common ground.

Chapter Four: Memory and the Global Gathering in Nathalie Handal's *The Lives of Rain*.

This chapter presents an analysis of Handal's book of Poetry *The Lives of Rain*. Handal's book of poetry is about the displacement of Palestinians and their exile as well as the marginalized groups in the peripheries of the world. Handal weaves the dilemma of her people in Palestine with the trauma of the marginalized groups around the world. The Palestinian

dilemma is Handal's perspective to see the world and to produce her project of 'global gathering.'

Conclusion: The conclusion is a synthesis of the findings of the chapters.

Chapter one

Chapter one

Memory Studies and Hybridity in the Post-Colonial Context

This chapter examines the relationship between memory, history, hybridity, and literature in the post-colonial era. To achieve this, I attempt a cross-generic study that examines the text from a conceptual vision in which the text is united by certain resonating concepts like memory, history and hybridity. Against a myriad of critical movements and theories that focus on the text as an ‘autonomous entity’ that is liberated from the restrictions of social, economic, and historical conditions, New Historicism and Memory Studies have come to represent revolutionary approaches that place the power back into external reality. Thus, this dissertation draws on New Historicism and Memory Studies to produce a re-reading of Wole Soyinka’s *Death and the King’s Horseman* (1975), Ahdaf Soueif’s *The Map of Love* (1999), and Nathalie Handal’s *The Lives of Rain* (2005) as situated in the postcolonial context. The increasing interest in memory is a widely debated phenomenon in the West in recent years. Memory and memory studies have been generating much cultural interest which now has come to name the very texture of cultural specificity, reconceived as “a multiplicity of corporeal performances: a layering of ritualised behaviours, belief system and forces of habits that constitute every experience of a cultural space”(Papoulias114-115). This fascination with memory raises questions for those struggling to understand memory’s meanings as well as its contemporary prominence. Three of the most famous writers who have been intrigued by the concept of memory are Wole Soyinka (1935-), Ahdaf Soueif (1950-), and Nathalie Handal (1969-). Although these three writers use different modes of expression: drama, novel, and poetry respectively, their works

reflect their fascination with the concept of memory which triggered the idea to examine their impulse to recall and reveal their past to foreign audience. Hence, I endeavour to conduct an interdisciplinary study that tackles a certain concept in these texts and compiles different modes of expression, i.e. genres.

In their study of literary genres, Mary Chamberlain and Paul Thompson define the literary genre as a type of text such as drama, poetry, or an element within the text such as history, memoirs, and/or autobiography(2). They add that a genre can be defined also by mood “as comedy, tragedy” or even by content; despite this, all these points are actually inseparable elements in the text (2). Hence, seeking an interdisciplinary approach that crosses the boundaries between literary genres achieves the aim of this study by investigating cross-generic modes of expression.

Studies of genre strive to recognise a literary work through its relationships to other works with similar characteristics. The critic’s task is then “to determine which relationships are significant and likely to increase understanding” (Stevens& Stewart 21). In his *Poetics* Aristotle views poetic art as imitation of reality. It is a type of *mimesis*. Aristotle categorised literary works according to “means, the objects, and manner of the imitation.” By means Aristotle referred to “the medium of the artwork, whether it communicated through words or music, prose or verse.” Aristotle defined objects as “the situations or the characters that were being imitated; and these could be represented as better, or worse than or like the norm” (Stevens& Stewart 21). Then, Aristotle referred to the manner as a point of view. He further mentioned three manners of imitation: the first is in the author’s voice; the second is in the voice of the character, and the third, it can be acted or dramatized. These classifications are significant to the type and function of the work of art.

Tragedy, for example, had experienced several changes until it had developed to the type of drama Aristotle knew. Thus, the quest of the genre remains Aristotelian, critics still rely heavily on Aristotle's *Poetics*, though with significant alternative perspectives that the borders between different genres have become blurred. Furthermore, according to Aristotle's findings the art is a mimesis of reality. In other words, the art imitates reality. So, when reality witnesses change, art does as well. For example, the modern novel gets rid of the conventional structure of prelude, climax, plot, and the definite end. Franz Kafka (1883-1924), and Virginia Woolf (1882-1941), among others, used the technique of the dreamlike novel: a surrealist writing depending on the stream of consciousness. The outstanding figures who used this technique are James Joyce in *Ulysses* (1922), and Virginia Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). This form of writing matches the fragmentation that happened after the World War I as shown in a movement that started in fine arts with the 'Guernica', a painting by Spanish painter Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). Then, surrealist literature appeared; literary works disrupted the linear movement of events that lead to a definite end. In that sense, Surrealist writing imitates the blurred reality of the modernity, where uncertainty and doubt prevailed people's lives after war. Also, the borders between genres become blurred, especially when it comes to narration.

For many critics, a narrative is an umbrella under which lies not only biography, autobiography, and the novel, but also historical works. Consequently, narrative and history intersect. The reader-response criticism has taken such a path, putting into account the response of the reader giving him/her a significant role in the interpretation of texts. Also, cultural materialists examine texts within their cultural contexts. Not only this but applying the methods of New Historicism to literary analysis

includes a range of techniques and strategies borrowed from various disciplines in the literary interpretative query.

Originally, New Historicism emerged in the late seventies and early eighties, as a school of modern literary criticism, and an approach in cultural studies. It was a reaction to the previous decontextualized critical approaches to both literature and history, including Formalism, New Criticism, Structuralism and Deconstruction (Das 117). New Historicism defies the separation between literary and non-literary texts. It fuses text with history, anthropology, politics, and economics while acknowledging the differences among the different disciplines (Montrose 395). It is this mutuality that marks New Historicism's view of the relationship between history and literature that gives the theory its uniqueness against old historicism.

New Historicists believe that language and culture have mutual influence(s). Language shapes and is shaped by the culture that uses it. In his book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), Stephen Greenblatt (1943-) coined the term New Historicism, which refers to an increasing interest in putting literary texts in their historical and consequently political contexts. Two major critics triggered the formulation of New Historicism namely, the British critic Raymond Williams, whose work also inspired cultural materialism, (the British parallel of New Historicism) and the French historian Michel Foucault. Foucault deems to re-examine the idea of the 'self.' He has examined the circumstances that affect the self to be victim of particular discourses and knowledge. In Greenblatt's New Historicism, texts are neither reflections of the real nor belong to finite social formations or long-term strategies, they do not have fixed meanings. Instead, they manipulate specific occasions in specific localities, jumping from one occasion to another. To

consolidate, Simon During asserts: “when Greenblatt dissociates himself from Foucault’s strategical sense of power, he distinguishes himself from so-called cultural materialism” (183). So, the text in New Historicism exchanges, negotiates and interacts with society; the text returns to society, not to imitate reality but to negotiate and interact. The text returns as an agent, not as an imitator. John Peck & Martin Coyle discuss “how Foucault’s project is an alternative reading of the past, refusing to cling on to old verities, and creating a much more uncertain sense of self and a disturbing view of the power relations of society” (199). New Historicists highlight history as a significant element in rereading the literary text, and they stress the significance of language which shapes history, as according to this school history is a discursive construct i.e. storytelling. So, New Historicism is directed by Foucault’s notion about the self in history.

Based on Foucault's line of thought, history for New Historicists is not the by-product of grand or heroic events, but of “ideology, authority, power and subversion” (Peck& Coyle 200). Thus, the borders between history and literature have become porous. The historian views literary texts as a main source of information about the past, and the literary critic relies on the historical background to explain the text. Greenblatt focused on literature as a manifestation of a culture in three ways: “as a manifestation of the concrete behaviour of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behaviour is shaped, and as a reference upon those codes” (Greenblatt *Renaissance* 3-4). In other words, literature can be a mirror of the behaviour of the author who is shaped by his/her culture, or as an indication of the spirit of the age it emerged from, or as a connotation and the expression of the rules that control the behaviour(s) expressed in the text. In short, the writer is obsessed with the existentiality of his/her culture, acting according to its

rules, which s/he consciously or unconsciously absorbed and assimilated through his/her work of art. Then, New Historicism is a good return to society within its historical context. The return of the text to its historical and social context in New Historicism differs from the previous mimetic existence of the text, where the text blindly and passively imitated reality. In New Historicism, the text interacts, negotiates with society. With this historical framework in mind, this dissertation attempts a reading of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*, Soueif's *The Map of Love*, and Handal's *The Lives of Rain*. The reading is not simply confined to the boundaries of social and historical forces in which the text was written but extends to search for the reasons beyond writing a hybrid text in the postcolonial context. Hence, I adopt New Historicism as an interdisciplinary approach along with Memory Studies to examine these texts as examples of the hybrid literary text in the postcolonial context.

Similarly, Cultural Studies approach has become the big umbrella under which all these groups lie. Cultural Studies is defined as “it is an academic field of interdisciplinary research that grew out of literary studies in the early 1960s in Britain and extended its investigation in culture, language and social meanings ... it aimed to take a much wider range of cultural production as its object of study” (Baldick 75). Accordingly, as Chamberlain and Thompson argue genre became no longer such a rigid classification, but “common assumptions between writer, speaker and audience of conventions, manner and tone, forms of delivery, timings, settings, shape, motifs and characters” (4). The text is not only ascribed to its author, the socio-historical context, but is also anchored in the different readers who are/were bounded to their socio-historical context. It is a complex cultural process which is always in progress.