

Reconstructing Identity in Post War Societies: Theme- Based Review in Selected Postcolonial Novels

Prof.Dr. Enas Subhi Aamer

College of Education for Women

University of Baghdad

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Summary:

Destroying all forms of hegemonic colonial power and control is the goal of intellectual decolonization. The use of protective survival mechanisms, which evoke a heightened sense of recovery, is part of war trauma identity studies. In order to restore reading as an ethical activity, this field seeks to reframe the reader-text interaction. War trauma can have a significant effect on a person's sense of self, leading to a decline in self-worth and self-esteem. Eventually, this can cause a traumatized person to put survival ahead of social and personal growth and their outlook on life in general. The research tackles a set of postcolonial novels that are explored from an educational point of view in order to emphasize the role of literature in reaffirming post traumatized identities. One similarity between postcolonial literature and war trauma fiction is the use of intertextuality, which allows marginalised voices to tell their own stories. It connects the past, present, and future, transcending temporal limitations. One proactive step to shield oneself from painful events is intellectual decolonisation. The process entails transforming grief into empowerment, turning pain into power, and recovering one's identity from colonial pressures.

Introduction

Intellectual decolonization refers to the transformative process of liberating oneself from the constraints of one's previous mindset in order to achieve personal growth and advancement. The pursuit of self-identity involves the process of breaking down and rebuilding. The process of incubating a trauma can be likened to three stages: pre-traumatic, traumatic, and post-traumatic. In the post-traumatic stage, individuals "work through" or "act out" their crises, as proposed by the American-born historian Dominick La Capra (1939-). When someone or a community engages in acting out, it means they are incapable of reconciling with their trauma. Engaging with the topic

of trauma via employment provides another perspective, enabling the potential for healing, acceptance, and advancement (Andermahr, pp.1-5).

1. Post-colonial Studies Trauma Fiction

The field of post-colonial studies has gained significant prominence. However, it is concerning that the discourse around decolonization is often succumbing to a binary framework and essentialist ideas. Despite criticism that Trauma fiction does not align with the study goals of postcolonial studies, its enduring popularity and the many reactions it has generated in postcolonial criticism indicate its continued appeal. Trauma fiction serves as reparative literature by intersecting with postcolonial fiction, enabling marginalized voices to articulate their own narratives. It surpasses the constraints of time by establishing connections between the past, present, and future. This text necessitates a deconstructive psychoanalytic analysis, which examines the complex connection between a civilization that has experienced trauma due to colonization and the resulting crisis of identity via a process of incubation. Engaging with trauma fiction provides insight into the world. However, it does not eliminate or remove trauma. Instead, it may contribute to the process of breaking down and rebuilding more morally and analytically sound methods of evaluating our existence, our context, and the dynamics of our interactions with others in the period of neocolonialism. The emergence of identity conflicts has supplanted conventional forms of warfare, resulting from the perpetration of epistemic violence. Epistemic violence refers to the use of force or coercion in relation to knowledge, which serves to uphold systems of dominance and is deeply ingrained in our understanding and beliefs. It pertains to the lingering consequences of physical violence that persist long after the physical acts have ceased. These consequences manifest as the erosion of historical knowledge, language, and the adoption of colonial perspectives in our awareness. Ambivalence, according to Bhabha's core concept theory, undermines the unequivocal power of colonial dominance. The presence of this perspective in colonial discourse is unwelcome to the colonizer since it subverts the dominant imperial narrative. The colonial subject's experience should not always be seen as disempowering, but rather as "ambi-valent" or having dual sources of power. Ambivalence undermines the dominant position of authority, allowing it to be influenced and transformed as it interacts with other cultures in a colonial setting. Postcolonial identity undergoes a constant shifting between several identities, allowing for the formation of a positive identity that transcends rigid binary systems of self or cultural identification. Hybrid identity

refers to the intermediate space that enables the development of novel approaches and practices. It involves incorporating information from one's colonial local culture and blending it with urban cultures without any issues (Visser, p.7).

2. Categorization of Colonial Paradigm

Inside the range of the remaining territories of the British Empire, there are two clear types of former colonies: Settle-invader colonies are lands that were designated as uninhabited or inhabited by submissive indigenous people. Colonizers invade the territories and forcefully remove the indigenous inhabitants by violent actions like massacres or slavery. They then ignore the existence and rights of the local residents. The founding of settler colonies, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and even South Africa, is significant in the realm of colonial history. The individuals are facing a difficult situation as they do neither match the requirements for entry into well-established and historically important European countries, nor do they fit within the social, economic, and political boundaries that characterize developing states. The entity is now in a hazardous state known as the "Second world," which is defined by an unclear status that does not clearly correspond with either of the two main categories. In addition to colonizing indigenous peoples, European powers also colonized several regions simultaneously. The second category of colonization includes the Occupation Colonies, which consisted of regions such as India, sections of South-East Asia, West and Central Africa, and numerous islands in the Caribbean. People encounter restrictions on their individual freedoms, verbal communication, religious convictions, and social frameworks. These specific colonies are often considered to have a higher level of authenticity in their post-colonial cultures when compared to the settler-invader groups. The prolonged domination of Ireland by the British, lasting for many centuries, may be accurately understood within the post-colonial paradigm. Unlike the United States, the British colony cannot be described as post-colonial since its political and military conditions have positioned it as a significant worldwide powerhouse. The colony listed above did not undergo the same level of historical and cultural marginalization as the other colonies that came before it (Gilbert and Tompkins 6).

3. Theoretical Framework

The research examines seven novels that address identical issues. The study draws upon the key theories of Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961), a West Indian psychoanalyst, philosopher, and anti-colonial cultural theorist. Fanon emphasizes the need to reconstruct national identity. Additionally, the study incorporates the

ideas of Edward Said (1935–2003), an American literary theorist, cultural critic, and political activist of Palestinian descent. Said exposed the false portrayal of the Orient or the East by the West. The study also incorporates the insights of Homi Bhabha (1909–1966), an Indian philanthropist physicist who highlights the advantages of embracing a new hybrid identity. Lastly, the study considers the perspectives of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942-), an Indian-American scholar, literary theorist, and feminist critic, who advocates for marginalized individuals and those who experience double displacement. These scholars have identified the most notable characteristic of our era, which is often referred to as "the age of trauma" or "the catastrophic age."

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) was a psychiatrist, political philosopher, and a prominent thinker in the field of black Atlantic theory at a time of anti-colonial liberation movements. He discusses his experiences with racial discrimination throughout the 1940s. The famous incident took place when he was sitting on a train beside a small Caucasian youngster and his mother. The toddler directed his finger towards Fanon and said thrice to his mother, "Behold, a negro, I am filled with fear; the Negro is going to consume me." Fanon was unable to dismiss it since it was repeated three times and had an impact on him. The toddler exposed the concealed truth that his remorseful mother attempted to keep secret. According to Dizayi (Dizayi, 2006. P.80), Fanon's civility and education had little significance to the others, since they just saw him as a mere color. Dubois uses the term "inaudibility" to describe this phenomenon. Ellison referred to it as "invisibility," while Baldwin viewed it as "nameless." Fanon, on the other hand, perceived his colonial or depersonalized self, shaped over many years to mimic the colonizer, as a completely shattered identity. He found that European writings overlooked his traumatization, offering no insight into the experience of being objectified and categorized in such a manner. The absence of shared experiences from European scholars served as a catalyst for his awakening. Consequently, he turned inward, drawing upon his own lived experiences. Nevertheless, Fanon still draws upon European works to propose a new understanding of decolonization. He underestimates African revolutionary strategies, deeming them inadequate, and argues that a more advanced and interconnected world can only be achieved through a violent revolution led by the native population (Dizayi, 2006 .P.80).

Edward Said, an American literary theorist, cultural critic, and political activist of Palestinian descent, challenged the Western portrayal of the Orient or the East and

highlighted the resistance against the hierarchical power dynamics imposed by colonizers over the colonized. According to Said, the main factor contributing to a fragmented sense of identity is the submission to oppressive forces. In this regard, he draws inspiration from the poststructuralist Derrida's "critique" and concepts like "center and margin" and "self and other" (Dizayi 82). Both thinkers assert that genuine identity may be molded via struggle against the colonial framework in order to eradicate the imposed image and return to the authentic essence of Eastern character. Said seeks to explore the true essence of colonial identity by envisioning an intermediate realm. According to him, there is no culture that is completely pure. However, there are various and authentic identities that exist in a middle ground. The real problem lies in the way representatives are created and how it affects the formation of identity. This "in-between space," as described by Ashcroft et al (1999), allows a marginalized and exiled individual to find a compromise between the past and present. Interestingly, it both accepts and rejects the other (Byrne, 2019.Chapter 8).

Homi Bhabha examines the process of constructing the identity of Third World nations and the reasons behind its perceived inferiority compared to the West. In his 1994 study "The Location of Culture," Bhabha discusses the concept of the "third space," which represents an intermediary space where moderation and compromise can be achieved. Bhabha's work elucidates the complex psychological position experienced by both the colonized and the colonizer. He asserts that the colonized is never consistently powerless; the colonizer is never consistently dominant. The purpose of the ambivalence work in these binaries is to dismantle the artificial constraints imposed by all binary oppositions (Young, 1995. p.161).

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak focuses on the intervention present in gender identity, nationality, and the representation of colonial and post-colonial matters. She asserts that her role as a teacher encompasses two domains:

to see how the master texts need us to construct their texts without acknowledging that need and to explore the differences and similarities between texts coming from the two sides engaged with the same problem simultaneously (qtd. in Gale p.597).

4. Intellectual Decolonization

The objective of the research is to examine the process of intellectual decolonization, which involves dismantling all forms of dominant colonial power and control. The study aims to focus on specific instances rather than making generalizations, and to identify and expose the flaws and inconsistencies of that power. This text advocates for a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of trauma. It specifically explores the concept of decolonizing trauma as addressed by postcolonial novelists from different countries. These novelists depict and examine the process of developing a post-traumatized identity using both symbolic and metaphorical approaches. The method of illustrating the process of decolonization is thematic. The notion of decolonizing trauma, together with its fundamental principles, offers essential empathy for interpreting a postcolonial literature and may potentially revolutionize our thought processes. By activating the imagination, the application of metaphorical reasoning enhances the credibility and dynamism of the message. It aids in protecting against rigid dichotomies (In-group and Out-group). To achieve decolonization of an identity, it is essential to position it in the center, as this fosters more productivity, acceptance, tolerance, liberation, and empowerment. This area is referred to as the ambivalent space. The product represents the reformation of a new identity, one that is essential and progressing towards global demand.

A predisposition to this type of fiction does not aim to create a universal narrative of trauma, but rather acts as an initial step towards recovery. As previously mentioned, listening to someone else's traumatic story has the ability to establish a therapeutic bond and provide a crucial form of therapy for post-traumatic growth. Examining postcolonial novels using the framework of decolonizing trauma theory encourages and provokes readers to scrutinize, interpret, experience, listen, and comprehend the historical traumas. This process involves confronting the atrocities of past trauma and subsequently embracing them as a means to revive and encapsulate one's former identity, ultimately leading to the establishment and reconstruction of a new sense of self. Utilizing a postcolonial theory while analyzing a literary piece provides a framework to examine historical, cultural, economic, social, and environmental

concerns. Adverse experiences may result in a beneficial transformation of both personal and group identity, serving as a means of restoration. (Schönfelder, 2013. p.9)

The selected authors bore testimony to horrific experiences and endeavor to understand themselves using a psychoanalytic approach. They form a fresh therapeutic partnership and empower those who have endured. Applying Mikail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism in this context allows for a conversation where characters express many perspectives, rather than only serving as the author's megaphone. They are engaging in a dialogue that spans different historical periods and contexts, using concepts such as operationalizing field, history, temporality, and spatial within a flexible framework. The books chosen for this research are literary writings that were produced throughout the 2000s. The research offers an overview of the identity problems depicted in literature created in postcolonial nations.

5. Thematic Reading for Postcolonial Novels

The first novel is *Anil's Ghost* (2002) by Michael Ondaatje who is a Sri Lankan-Canadian writer born in 1943. Ondaatje highlights the notion that identity development is not a static concept, but rather a product of cultural and ideological influences. Anil Tissera, a well-educated lady residing in the West, returns to her home country after a fifteen-year absence to investigate cases of "unknown extrajudicial execution" on behalf of the United Nations. She reinvented and established her identity via the exchange of goods and services with her brother. Ondaatje creates a blended cultural identity via his persona. According to him, the process of developing one's identity entails a constant blending and mixing of different cultures, and it should extend beyond national boundaries. Ondaatje conceptualizes intellectual decolonization as the interplay between the "self" and the "other".

The second novel is *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by the Indian novelist Kiran Desai, born in 1971. Desai emphasizes the problem of a post-traumatized identity, particularly for individuals who are caught in a state of being in-between, feeling alienated and displaced. She argues that the root cause of this identity crisis is her characters' inability to embrace a hybrid identity due to the lack of assimilation between their old cultures and the new generation, as well as the reluctance of the older generation to accept the traits of the new culture. Alienation and dislocation may manifest both within and outside. Desai highlights the negative aspects of contemporary lifestyle. The protagonists' intellectual decolonization effectively

separates them from the challenges they encounter when seeking a better life in a distant country, despite the underdevelopment, poverty, and lack of education in their own homeland. They recognize that it is likely possible to develop a feeling of belonging and identity just inside one's own country.

Toni Morrison, an African-American author who lived from 1931 to 2019, wrote the third novel in this review titled *God Help the Child* in 2015. Morrison introduces the notion of marginalized identity and its expression via the protagonist named Bride, a youthful and beautiful individual with a complexion of intense blue-black hue. This character has endured emotional distress due to the abandonment she experienced from her mother, who had a lighter skin tone. The subsequent profound, curative, and remedial encounter between Bride and Rain (one distinctly dark, the other "pale as bone," one mature, one juvenile, but emotionally equivalent) expresses the process of intellectual liberation from colonial influences. Despite experiencing the detrimental consequences of trauma, Bride forges a fresh identity that transcends the perspective of post-racial blackness.

The fourth novel, titled *Hayati* (2000), was written by Miriam Cooke (1948), an American author and scholar specializing in Middle Eastern and Arab world studies. Her research interests include on contemporary Arabic literature and the critical examination of women's involvement in the public domain. She is an expert in Islamic feminism and the exploration of gender dynamics in modern Arabic literature, particularly in relation to war. The work portrays a poignant and realistic narrative of three successive generations of Palestinian women. Their voices convey the experiences of grief and sadness, as their lives are shattered by the devastating consequences of war, sexual assault, displacement, and destitution. Samya resides in Palestine during the 1920s, while Asia witnesses the tragic event of the Deir Assin massacre, and Maryam manages to escape both war and emigration. Events such as the establishment of Israel, the June War, and the Gulf War are interpreted in very personal and familial contexts, such as the tragic loss of a young son, forced displacement from one's nation, and the horrifying experience of sexual assault. *Hayati* depicts a recurring life pattern experienced by Middle Eastern individuals, which has unfortunately been oversimplified and applied to various groups such as the Lebanese, Iraqis, Kurds, Algerians, and Palestinians. This pattern involves exile and diaspora, leading to feelings of separation and alienation. The story provides relief from the stress caused by prolonged periods of violence in the area by presenting several characters that develop a hybridized cultural identity. The

profound will to continue with the pursuit of life despite the many conflicts and disruptions is the formidable task faced by *Hayati*. This is a communication sent at the global community, serving as a plea to recognize our shared human nature. This book presents a success that is distinctively feminine, but ultimately it is a triumph that transcends gender and encompasses all of humanity in the face of challenging circumstances. Cooke argues that the process of identity development necessitates ongoing cultural syncretism and hybridity, and it should extend beyond national boundaries. She views intellectual decolonization as the interplay between the "self" and the "other".

The fifth literary work in question is *The Corpse Washer*, published in 2013, authored by Sinan Antoon, an Iraqi poet, novelist, and literary translator born in 1967. Antoon is widely recognized as one of the most highly regarded writers in the Arab world. His main focus is on the topic of an identity that has been deeply affected by the experience of war and its aftermath. The hero Jawad not only experiences the cultural and historical pain, but also witnesses the American military invasion, which conceals more deeply-rooted human traumas. The work, although sometimes resembling a CNN broadcast on Iraq as seen through the eyes of an Iraqi narrator, effectively portrays what Bakhtin refers to as an ideological conflict inside the world itself. The presence of conservative religious factions in Iraq signifies an ideological clash among different sectarian groupings. Antoon uses the language in the book not just as a means of representation, but also as the very thing being represented, so highlighting a Saussurean conception of language. The Saussurean model of language may be seen in its treatment of art as a "self-contained entity" and an "authoritative soliloquy" that is influenced by the contrast between the general and the specific. Antoon is intrigued by the concept of "epistemic violence" coined by Gayatri Spivak. He aims to chronicle the history of marginalized individuals and shed light on untold narratives. According to him, books depict an alternate historical account rather than the official one. The pomegranate tree thrives despite being regularly treated with the same water used to cleanse corpses, and the artist Jawad, who faces several disappointments, demonstrates remarkable resilience and perseverance, ultimately achieving his parents' aspirations. Jawad's unwavering determination and steadfast conviction in the righteousness of his claim, despite the many adversities he has faced, have preserved his inner being inside a framework of intellectual decolonization. This has safeguarded his human experience from being forgotten or overlooked.

The sixth novel is for Abdulrazak Gurnah, a Tanzanian-born British author; it explores the repercussions of hidden truths rooted in unequal power dynamics, such as class, gender, and love inequalities, in his 2017 book *Gravel Heart*. Michel Foucault's classification of power is rooted in the examination of the historical development of social and political institutions, as well as the analysis of discourses. The main protagonist, Salim, is metaphorically imprisoned and struggles to find a sense of belonging in his unfamiliar surroundings. He feels more isolated from the world he has left behind, since his sufferings stem from having dual nationalities but no true home. Gurnah's approach of situating Salim inside the multicultural and micro-spaces of the host culture elucidates his strategy for addressing decolonization. *Gravel Heart* challenges the notion of homeland as a welcoming environment by portraying marginalized individuals via Salim's exploration of his own identity and his storytelling. In his article "Of Other Spaces," Foucault emphasizes the significance of space as a crucial analytical concept that exposes realms where power, or other social categories, becomes perceptible. Salim's understanding enables him to categorize and delineate others in his vicinity. Gurnah employs Foucauldian heterotopia spaces, which possess the ability to either open or restrict access to spaces from different temporal and cultural contexts. These spaces possess distinct attributes resulting from their social and cultural practices, which are linked to their spiritual significance rather than their material essence or architectural design. This highlights the notion that resistance inevitably emerges in spaces where power is present.

The seventh novel is *The Bird Tattoo* (2020) by the Iraqi-US-based poet and novelist Dunya Mikhail (1965-). This novel is a powerful and expansive narrative that takes place over two turbulent decades in Iraq. This is a distressing narrative about the trafficking of Yazidi women in Iraq by ISIS. The story centers on Helen and Elias, who develop a romantic relationship and are married in the valley of Halliki. They encounter a group in Mosul that promotes and accepts rape and pedophilia as a means to support terrorists. Helen, a married woman and mother, discovers that she is trapped within a refurbished educational institution together with more than 100 abducted females. Each of them has been captured on camera and shown on the official website of the Islamic State. During the overnight hours, the guards engage in explicit acts of physical violence and sexual assault on these hostages, whom they see as commodities. Mikhail explores the representation of a marginalized identity via the figure of Helen. In addition to this tragic event, the story illuminates other

facets of Yazidi folklore, which is abundant in remarkable traditions and myths. The novel *The Bird Tattoo* explores how female solidarity serves as a means to reclaim visibility, dignity, voice, and human worth. Helen's personality, according to Freudian theory, may be seen in terms of a binary opposition. It is divided between her aware self and her suppressed desires. Her achievement in cultivating her own identity exemplifies the Lacanian notion that identity formation is an ongoing process rather than a fixed state.

Conclusion

The process of intellectual decolonization in this research involves the notion of dismantling all forms of dominant colonial power and control. It concerns the decolonization of an identity, it is essential to position it in the center, as this fosters more productivity, acceptance, tolerance, liberation, and empowerment. The resulted area is referred to as the ambivalent space, and it represents the reformation of a new identity, one that is essential and progressing towards global demand. Michael Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* highlights the notion that identity development is not a static concept, but rather a product of cultural and ideological influences. While Kiran Desai's protagonists' intellectual decolonization in *The Inheritance of Loss* effectively separates them from the challenges they encounter when seeking a better life in a distant country, despite the underdevelopment, poverty, and lack of education in their own homeland. They recognize that it is likely possible to develop a feeling of belonging and identity just inside one's own country.

Tony Morrison's *God Help the Child*, on the other hand and despite experiencing the detrimental consequences of trauma, through her heroin Bride, forges a fresh identity that transcends the perspective of post-racial blackness. Then comes Miriam Cooke's *Hayati* in which she argues that the process of identity development necessitates ongoing cultural syncretism and hybridity, and it should extend beyond national boundaries. She views intellectual decolonization as the interplay between the "self" and the "other".

In *The Corpse Wash*, Sinan Antoon's hero whose unwavering determination and steadfast conviction in the righteousness of his claim, despite the many adversities he has faced, have preserved his inner being inside a framework of intellectual decolonization. This has safeguarded his human experience from being forgotten or overlooked. Equally *Gravel Heart* by Abdulrazak Gurnah in which Gurnah employs Foucauldian heterotopia spaces, which possess the ability to either open or restrict access to spaces from different temporal and cultural contexts. These spaces possess

distinct attributes resulting from their social and cultural practices, which are linked to their spiritual significance rather than their material essence or architectural design. This highlights the notion that resistance inevitably emerges in spaces where power is present.

Finally, Dunya Mikhail's *The Bird Tattoo* successfully explores how female solidarity serves as a means to reclaim visibility, dignity, voice, and human worth. Helen's personality, according to Freudian theory, may be seen in terms of a binary opposition. It is divided between her aware self and her suppressed desires. Her achievement in cultivating her own identity exemplifies the Lacanian notion that identity formation is an ongoing process rather than a fixed state.

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أعادة بناء الهوية في مجتمعات ما بعد الحرب: دراسة موضوعية في روايات انكليزية مختارة

أ. د. ايناس صبحي عامر

كلية التربية للبنات - جامعة بغداد



enassubhi@coeduw.uobaghdad.edu.iq

الكلمات المفتاحية: إلتهحر من ازمة ما بعد الاستعمار، صدمة الحرب، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، التعافي، العنف المعرفي

المخلص:

إن تدمير كل أشكال القوة الاستعمارية المهيمنة والسيطرة هو هدف إنهاء الاستعمار الفكري. إن استخدام آليات البقاء الوقائية، التي تثير شعوراً متزايداً بالتعافي، هو جزء من دراسات هوية صدمات الحرب. ومن أجل استعادة القراءة كنشاط أخلاقي، يسعى هذا المجال إلى إعادة صياغة تفاعل القارئ مع النص. يمكن أن يكون لصدمة الحرب تأثير كبير على شعور الشخص بذاته، مما يؤدي إلى انخفاض في احترام الذات وتقدير الذات. في النهاية، يمكن أن يؤدي هذا إلى دفع الشخص المصاب بصدمة إلى وضع البقاء على قيد الحياة قبل النمو الاجتماعي والشخصي ونظرته إلى الحياة بشكل عام. يتناول البحث مجموعة من روايات ما بعد الاستعمار والتي يتم استكشافها من وجهة نظر تعليمية بهدف التأكيد على دور الأدب في إعادة تأكيد هويات ما بعد الصدمة. أحد أوجه التشابه بين الأدب ما بعد الاستعماري وروايات صدمات الحرب هو استخدام التناس، والذي يسمح للأصوات المهمشة بسرد قصصها الخاصة. إنه يربط الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل، ويتجاوز القيود الزمنية. إحدى الخطوات الاستباقية لحماية النفس من الأحداث المؤلمة هي إنهاء الاستعمار الفكري. تتضمن هذه العملية تحويل الحزن إلى تمكين، وتحويل الألم إلى قوة، واستعادة هوية المرء من الضغوط الاستعمارية.