

The Dialectic of Memory and Oblivion as a Narrative Foundation in the Postmodern Moroccan Novel: A Study of Muḥammad Barrādah's *Lu'bat al-Nisyān* and *Imra'ah al-Nisyān*

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Introduction

Postmodernism, by challenging grand narratives and traditional boundaries, has transformed established discourses in art and literature, paving the way for the emergence of new movements such as metafiction. Metafiction, as one of the most distinctive manifestations of postmodern literature, being cognizant of its own fictional nature, engages in the unveiling of artifice, the dismantling of metanarratives, temporal play, and self-conscious character construction (Waugh, 1990, p. 8; Hutcheon, 2004, p. 3). Muḥammad Barrādah (1938), a prominent Moroccan novelist and critic, in his two novels *Lu'bat al-Nisyān* (1987) and *Imra'ah al-Nisyān* (2002), employing metafictional techniques, has created a narrative world in which the boundaries between reality and imagination, memory and oblivion, and author and character become intertwined. The dialectic of memory and oblivion, as one of the most fundamental philosophical and psychological questions concerning the nature of identity, existence, and time, has been unprecedentedly represented in postmodern literature.

Methodology

The present research employs an interdisciplinary methodology integrating postmodern narratology from Arabic language and literature with cognitive psychology of memory. From narratology, the study utilizes analytical tools derived from the theories of Patricia Waugh (1990) on metafiction as self-conscious fiction, Linda Hutcheon (2004) on historiographic metafiction, and Brian McHale (1994, 2016) on the ontological dominant in postmodern fiction. From cognitive psychology, the research draws on theories of memory processes including encoding, storage, and retrieval, as well as the role of cognitive biases in memory selection and the function of defense mechanisms such as repression and denial (Ganji, 2010, pp. 230-245). The research method combines qualitative content

analysis with an analytical-descriptive approach. Data collection is library-based, utilizing authoritative Persian and Arabic sources, and data analysis is conducted inferentially. The analytical process follows three steps: first, postmodern narratological techniques in both novels are identified and classified; second, cognitive psychological concepts of memory are applied to analyze how characters encode, store, and retrieve memories; and third, findings from both analyses are integrated within a unified interpretive framework.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of *Lu'bat al-Nisyān* reveals that Barrādah extensively employs techniques such as the narrator of narrators and narrative layering (35% frequency), the tension between oblivion and recollection (28% frequency), the presence of the author within the text and the unveiling of fictionality (17% frequency), direct address to the reader (11% frequency), and the rebellion of characters (7% frequency). The narrator of narrators, a self-conscious metafictional character, states: "I feel that the law of the game I have followed so far no longer convinces me, I, the narrator of narrators lurking in the dark corner, holding the threads of narration" (Barrādah, 1987, p. 44). This self-awareness reveals that narrative is not a coherent whole but a collection of fragmented pieces that the narrator of narrators attempts to connect. In *Imra'ah al-Nisyān*, the most frequently deployed techniques include short-circuiting (30% frequency), dialogue between the author and imaginary characters (22% frequency), indeterminacy (18% frequency), polyphony (13% frequency), and the intermingling of reality and fiction (9% frequency).

Conclusion

The interdisciplinary analysis of Barrādah's two novels demonstrates that the dialectic of memory and oblivion serves as the foundational narrative principle in both works, operating simultaneously at the levels of plot, characterization, and narrative structure. This dialectic, rooted in psychoanalytic concepts of repression and return of the repressed, as well as in the postmodern philosophical stance of relativism and indeterminacy, enables Barrādah to create a narrative world in which no single narrative can be accepted as final and definitive, and every attempt to achieve a unified and coherent account of memories is met with failure. The personification of oblivion in *Imra'ah al-Nisyān* represents an evolution in the author's approach to the theme, transforming an abstract concept into a tangible human entity. The contribution of this research to the development of Arabic narratology lies in providing a practical model for the interdisciplinary analysis of Arabic fictional works by integrating postmodern narratology and

cognitive psychology of memory. This approach opens new horizons for understanding the relationship between narrative form and psychological content in Arabic literature.

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