

Space and Memory: Remembering Cyprus in Contemporary British Fiction

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Cyprus, historically embroiled in political struggle due to its strategic position on trade routes between Europe and Asia, has witnessed centuries of conquest, colonization, and political unrest that left indelible marks on the island's psyche. Continuing to impact Cyprus' identity and political landscape to this day, the partition of the island in 1974, as a result of the political crises between the Turkish and Greek governments, has been a particularly significant event. In the corpus of British fiction, novels depicting Cyprus and the collective memory of 1974 have emerged within the last two decades as a medium to explore and understand the trauma of the conflict and its aftermath. These novels offer insights into the events leading up to the Greek coup and Turkish military intervention in 1974, the island's partition and its aftermath. This study focuses on four selected novels authored by Victoria Hislop, Christy Lefteri, and Elif Shafak. Placing a substantial emphasis on the representation of spaces, these novels provide the reader with literary cartographies that map the physical and emotional landscapes of the island. From streets to taverns, these spaces are charged with the traumatic memory of the partition. Through a close reading of selected novels, the study seeks to understand how these spaces are depicted, inhabited, and remembered, and how they contribute to the formation of individual and collective memories. Through the exploration of the specific case of Cyprus, the study hopes to contribute to the understanding of how partition memory is produced, circulated, and transformed through literature.

This study builds on the assumption that partition fundamentally altered the spatial, social, and psychological landscape of Cyprus, leaving an indelible mark on the collective memory of its inhabitants. It represents a rupture in the continuity of the island's history and a fracture in the fabric of Cypriot society that continues to reverberate through generations. This study posits that the partition memory has played a significant role in what constitutes the diasporic Cypriot identity. It will be argued that beyond the atrocities of colonial rule and civil war, the partition

imposes an additional burden, one that weighs heavily on the shoulders of present and future generations, perpetuating a pervasive ethos of division and longing for reconciliation.

Through a scrutiny of contemporary British novels, the study aims to shed light on the ways in which the partition of Cyprus is remembered and negotiated. Focusing on the specific context of Cyprus, this study aspires to address broader questions surrounding displaced memory and how it manifests within the realm of literature. In an attempt to explore the intersections of memory, space, and identity, the study will address the following questions:

- How is the memory of partition of Cyprus represented within the corpus of British fiction?
- What are the memory dynamics behind the narratives of public and private spaces, spanning from Cyprus to Britain?
- What kind of a memory discourse is transmitted and circulated through these works?
- How does the unique socio-political context of a divided Cyprus contribute to the complexities of memory representation within British fiction?

Drawing from trauma and memory studies, the selected novels will be scrutinized through the lenses of transcultural memory (De Cesari and Rigney, Erll), diasporic memory (Agnew), and postmemory (Hirsch). These concepts illuminate the complex web of memory that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries which seems fitting for the emergence of a British-Cypriot trend that flourished after a period of *latency*. Transcultural memory, as conceptualized by scholars such as Ann Rigney, Astrid Erll, and Chiara De Cesari, will help explore how the memories of 1974 are transmitted, transformed and negotiated across diverse cultural and geographical spaces. Along with transcultural memory, diasporic memory be instrumental in this study by providing a theoretical framework to examine how memories of homeland, exile, and resilience are preserved, transmitted, and negotiated within the Cypriot diaspora in Britain. Furthermore, Marianne Hirsch's postmemory will offer a valuable framework for understanding how the traumatic experiences of the atrocities of 1974 and the ensuing displacement continue to reverberate in the present.

In attempting to address the memory dynamics underlying narratives of public and private spaces extending from Cyprus to Britain, this study draws upon the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja. Henri Lefebvre's seminal work, *The Production of Space*, introduces the

notion of space as a dynamic entity, continuously shaped and reshaped by human interactions and societal forces (39). Henri Lefebvre's triad of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space establishes the multifaceted nature of space and emphasizes the intertwined nature of materiality and cultural meaning in shaping spatial dynamics (38-42). Complementing Lefebvre's framework, Soja focuses on individual experiences and interpretations of space asserting that "the organisation, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience" (80). Together, Lefebvre's and Soja's spatial theories offer a comprehensive framework for understanding why spaces are remembered in particular ways.

When applicable, this study will make use of narratological analysis, particularly focalisation, given its significance in memory formation. Coined by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse* (1972), focalisation pertains to "a selection of narrative information". By selectively presenting narrative information, focalization can reflect the boundaries of what an individual or group remembers or chooses to remember. Frequent shifts in focalisation contribute to the polyphony of narratives, allowing access to the inner workings of diverse groups. By employing layers and shifts in focalisation, the narratives present different levels of disclosure and different patterns of engagement with memory and space. "Through a multi-perspectival expansion of the remembered world, fictions of memory can design a panorama of co-existing collective memories: Shared interpretations of the past, but also incompatible memories of the shared collective past, become visible" (Neumann 339). Highlighting the narrativization process of 1974 and the partitioning of the island, the adopted gaze becomes a crucial element in constructing versions of the Cypriot past, serving to both intensify and interrogate individual and collective recollections of 1974.

Setting the historical background of Cyprus's history of colonialism, civil conflict and partition, the introduction will display the particular case of Cyprus and the dynamics at play as a partitioned geography. The first chapter will establish partition as collective trauma, and lay out the memory and space nexus in relation to partition memory. It will then review the existing studies on partition literature. With a comparative approach, the studies on partition literature surrounding India and Pakistan, Ireland and Northern Ireland and Israel and Palestine will be reviewed, and the specific case of partition literature of Cyprus will be identified as part of this broader theme. As for the literary analysis, adopting a diachronic reading, the study will attempt

to portray the evolution of partition literature within the British-Cypriot context and reveal the trends and nuances of memory politics employed.

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