

“Anecdote” and the Interdisciplinary Nature of New Historicism from the Point of View of Greenblatt and Gallagher

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1- Introduction

New Historicism is a critical approach associated with Steven Greenblatt. It has been criticized that, like other methods of text criticism, it is not theorized. Greenblatt, as the flagship of this approach, accepts this criticism. The lack of agreement on a unified theory is rooted in the post-modern nature and interdisciplinary interpretations of New Historicism. This post-structuralist and post-modern approach works in a democratic and non-dogmatic way and is considered interdisciplinary in two ways. First, it is based on the methods and opinions of theorists from other academic fields such as anthropology with Geertz's method in discussing culture and multi-layered description, Derrida's poststructuralist philosophy, Foucault's philosophical and social opinions in the way he combines power discourse, and Lacan's psychology, and employs them according to its own aims. Secondly, in its special textualism, this approach is quite different from the textualism used in other critical schools. Its textualism does not mean that there is nothing outside the literary text — as it is considered in New Criticism. In its critical practice, it takes advantage of both literary and non-literary texts through connecting them. Anecdotes are marginal texts outside

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the main text that can be from fields outside literature .The use of anecdotes explains the interdisciplinary nature of new historicism .The lack of a coherent theory in this approach leads to ambiguities and misunderstandings .The main questions of this research are ,with respect to the second aspect of its interdisciplinary nature ,how New Historicism has created a connection and interaction between the literary and non-literary fields and what is the nature of anecdote in New Historicism.

2 -Aim and methodology

The present essay ,using a descriptive-analytical method and with the help of one of Greenblatt and Gallacher’s articles entitled” Antihistory and Narrative ,“pursues two goals .First ,by examining and explaining the term used in this approach ,namely, Narrative ,it explains the interdisciplinary nature of this approach in the second aspect ,and second ,it tries to resolve some of the ambiguities of this approach regarding this term .First ,we have provided a background of the main components of post-structuralism and postmodernism and the relationship of new historicism with them in order to pave the way for understanding the subject of antihistory .Then ,we have tried to explain antihistory based on these components ,and then we have linked Narrative ,which is the main subject of this research ,to antihistory ,and then we have presented the necessity of using Narrative ,and finally we have provided examples of Narrative.

3 -Discussion

In the introduction to his book *Learning to Curse* ,Greenblatt points out” :Recently, following my interest in anthropology and post-structuralism ,I have called what I do’ Cultural Poetics ‘or’ New Historicism .“Along with the emergence of post-structuralism ,the artistic attitude of postmodernism emerges and its authors show the ideas of post-structuralism in practice .What is important in this research is the common aspects of these two .Some of the commonalities of post-structuralism and post-modern worldview are” :doubt about all depth models ,decentralization from the world and self ,negation of elitist aesthetics and experimental formalism ,breaking all the boundaries of speech ,erasing the boundaries between high and low culture, art and goods ,and resistance to meaning and interpretation “.What is prominent in

these commonalities ,functioning as key terms ,are the concepts” negation/opposite.“
Stressing the keyword” negation/anti ,“New Historicism is an approach that is based on the negation of the principles of other ideas and methods of conventional criticism .According to Greenblatt” ,New Historicism initially meant impatience with the new American criticism ,the confusion of established norms and procedures ,a mixture of oppositions and restless curiosity “and if ,according to what Greenblatt says ,New Historicism is a post-structuralist approach ,it moves against the history of conventional criticism ;that is ,it seeks to negate the conventional ideas and methods of criticism and wants to stop ,destroy ,and make ineffective the critical macro-narratives and methods in the history of criticism .Macro-narrative and counter-history are post-modernist terms” .Macro-narrative “literally” refers to a narrative that serves as a basis for the options that a culture determines at various scientific, political ,moral ,etc .levels .It gives legitimacy ,explains them ,or covers or reconciles their various conflicts as a master narrative .Every grand narrative can serve a certain form of class power and ideology by cultivating its desired themes ,by narrating its journey ,by creating its ideals ,by celebrating its heroes ,by propagating its norms as universal norms “From a historical point of view ,every discourse) historical, political ,literary ,religious ,moral ,etc (.has a history and a macro-narrative that narrates its thoughts ,frameworks ,and universal norms .In contrast to the macro narrative ,a” micro-narrative “is not worth being recorded in general ,official history. The historian ignores it and it is marginal and stands outside the circle of history or macro narrative .The micro-narratives outside the scope of history are called” counter-history .“Counter-history opposes not only the dominant narratives ,but also dominant modes of historical thinking and research methods .New historicists use” anecdote“ for their counter-historical purposes .An anecdote is a real work that reveals the incompleteness and formality of the historical narrative — its discursive nature .Its compact totality has always prevented the progress of more comprehensive historical narratives ,regardless of time ,place or the narrator’s intentions ,and has provoked new peripheral ruptures .The anecdotes used by the New Historicism are employed to both interrupt the sequence of events in a narrative and to stay outside the field of literature and thus prove to be useful in literary criticism ;since in New Historicism, an anecdote is considered a text or a narrative ,and texts lose their exclusive identity

)as literary ,historical ,etc ,(and it does not matter if the anecdote belongs to the fields of history or literature or others .More importantly ,in criticizing literary texts ,when the anecdote is outside the field of literature ,finding and distinguishing the anecdote or counter-history and its connection with the literary text which look irrelevant leads to surprise and strangeness ,which is favored by New Historians .Anecdotes ,due to their unconventional content or through their formal prominence) strangeness in form and language ,(cause a break in meaning and unreality in the macro-narrative .Every anecdote is history ,but not every anti-history is an anecdote .Not every anecdote is valuable in new historicism .All anecdotes are not valuable in New Historicism. Strange and far-fetched anecdotes have value .New Historicism is concerned with the anecdotes that are on the sidelines ,suppressed ,look strange and original and mostly outside the field of literature hitherto unnoticed. New Historicism has chosen culture as a text in its research in order to look for cultural codes that resonate with social energy in the literary text. This expands the field of research and culture does not include only canonical and official works, but the main body of culture from the New Historicists' point of view is formed by a wide range of marginal works that bear within them the realities. Tracing this resonance requires the researcher to use anecdotes, both literary and non-literary texts outside of the original, main text, in order to clarify the subject of the research with their help and through interpretive practice.

4- Conclusion

Anecdote has a primary and important place in the methodology of New Historicism and New Historicists generally criticize literary texts through anecdotes. An anecdote is a marginal text that is linked to the main text. It may be literary, but most of the texts are from fields outside literature. Using anecdote and relating it to the literary text proves one of the interdisciplinary aspects of the New Historicism. Anecdote works against history, it contains a real story that has not been heard and that wants to be heard.

New historicists view the facts in history and grand narratives in every discourse with a skepticism resulting from a postmodernist outlook. Using anecdotes as counter-history, critics in this approach try to show the reality in a different way.

They disrupt and destroy the progression and course of history or macro-narrative through anecdotes. They want to replace the unheard narration of the anecdotes with the usual and dominant macro-narratives. The first anecdote which enters at the outset of history, changes its direction and course and, as it goes forward, other anecdotes are summoned and invited and other scenes enter the current of history. They create a new narrative that reveals a new reality. The first anecdote that sits on the forefront of history is very important and it should be unexpected, accidental with extreme strangeness. It can be said that New Historicism is itself counter-historical and, unlike other critical approaches, it tries to act against history and the flow of conventional critical methods both in basics as well as principles and in methodology. In employing anecdote, this approach moves in opposition to New Criticism, whose textualism is limited to a single text, while New Historicism summons other texts, in a democratic and interdisciplinary way, according to their suitability.

5- Keywords: interdisciplinary nature of New Historicism, Anecdote, counterhistory, Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Gallagher.

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