

Journal of Romance Studies

Multidirectional memory and exile in Jacques Hassoun's polyphonic novel *Alexandries*

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Journal of Romance Studies (2013), 13, (2), 94–115.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3828/jrs.13.2.94> Language: English Pages: 22

Abstract

Jacques Hassoun was born in Alexandria in 1936 into an Arabic and French-speaking Jewish family. In 1954 he went into exile in France where he settled until his death in 1999. Best remembered today as an influential Lacanian psychoanalyst, he was also the author of many books, articles and essays on his native Alexandria, Jewish history, Diaspora, exile and trauma, as well as the interaction between language, memory and identity. A major concern for Hassoun was transgenerational transmission, with a special emphasis on the need for the descendants of exiles to learn about their history and culture of origin. In his only novel, *Alexandries* (1985), Hassoun grapples in autofictional, polyphonic form with these major themes. Rather than the work of a nostalgic exile as other critics have suggested, this article argues that *Alexandries* is a complex example of memory work which not only brings the specificity of Jewish Egyptian exiles to the fore but also rejects the common assumption that, to quote Michael Rothberg (2009: 4–5), there is a straight line running 'from memory to identity and that the only kinds of memories and identities that are therefore possible are ones that exclude elements of alterity and forms of commonality with others'. Such a comparative, 'multidirectional' approach to memory works well in relation to the form, structure and content of *Alexandries*, a text born out of Hassoun's own multicultural identity, his Trotskyist internationalist socialist politics and his theories of repetition compulsion as applied to society.

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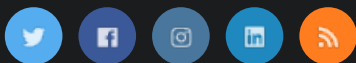
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The polyphonic novel is defined in Bakhtin's account by the quality of the relationship between narrator and character, in that the former allows the latter right to the final word - the character's voice is never ultimately submerged by that of the narrator. Thus Bakhtin describes Dostoevsky's novels thus: "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices is in fact the chief characteristic of Dostoevsky's novels". ... Polyphonic Novels. Narrative featuring a diversity of points of view and/or voices. Score. A book's total score is based on multiple factors, including the number of people who have voted for it and how highly those voters ranked the book. All Votes Add Books To This List. 1. Jacques Hassoun (20 October 1936 – 24 April 1999) was a French psychoanalyst and proponent of the ideas of Jacques Lacan. Hassoun developed a theory of depression and a reparative theory of transmission. Hassoun wrote several works on the history of the modern Jews of Egypt, among them *Histoire des Juifs du Nil* (Minerve,1990)[1], *Alexandries et autres récits* and *Alexandries* (a novel). He wrote eloquently of the culture of the Jews of Egypt and of their disappearance in the wake of Egyptian nationalism. Hassoun was born in Alexandria, Egypt in 1936 and settled in France in 1954 at the age of 18 where he was exiled after being accused and imprisoned by Egyptian authorities for communist activity. He remained in France for the rest of his life. About memory and retelling. Jacques Hassoun was born in Alexandria in 1936 into an Arabic and French-speaking Jewish family. In 1954 he went into exile in France where he settled until his death in 1999. Best remembered today as an influential Lacanian psychoanalyst, he was also the author of many books, articles and essays on his native Alexandria, Jewish history, Diaspora, exile and trauma, as well as the interaction between language, memory and identity. A major concern for Hassoun was transgenerational transmission, with a special emphasis on the need for the descendants of exiles to learn about their history and cul

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