The Archaeology of Emotional Life in Patrice Nganang's *Mont Plaisant*

PAUL N. TOURÉ
Millikin University
ptoure@millikin.edu

ABSTRACT

Patrice Nganang's historical novel *Mount Pleasant* (2011) is a beautiful interplay between imagination, archival sources, time, and memory. More than a simple product of the author's imagination utilizing colonial archives, this novel is a celebration of an unprecedented cultural memory, initiated by a Cameroonian king, Sultan Njoya, whose prodigious cultural creativity and intellectual life is unique in African history. This study aims at delineating the aesthetic entwinement between archive, memory, and emotion. Attention given to the argument that despite the novel's critics of racialized relations embedded in the ruling strategies of the three consecutive European imperial powers (German, English, and French) in Cameroon, *Mount Pleasant* can be regarded as an archaeological site, a powerful exploration of human nature as well as a convincing ethics of storytelling on human understanding in this age of mind. The stories created by Nganang ultimately lead to the conclusion that there are coalescent aesthetic influences between historical features of this literary text, which in turn translates these historical sources into new epistemologies of emotional memories and as a result constitutes a call to acknowledge the place and merits of this original cultural memory in the history of African cultural production within the current context of a global paradigm.

"Je me suis attaché dans cette étude à toucher la misère du Noir. Tacitement et affectivement" 'In this study I have attempted to touch on the misery of black man—tactfully and affectively.' (Fanon 131)

It's a kind of literary archeology: On the basis of some information and a little bit of guesswork you journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply. What makes it fiction is the

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> nature of the imaginative act: my reliance on the image—on the remains-in addition to recollection, to yield up a kind of a truth. (Morrison 92)

Patrice Nganang made his first major appearance on the African literary scene with his second novel, *Dog Days: An Animal Chronicle* (1999). The impact this fiction made on most readers was comparable to that of *The Son-of-the-Female-Male: A Fictional Tale* (1992) by Ivorian author and current minister of culture and Francophonie Maurice Bandaman. Both Francophone novels share at least two literary features: they permitted their respective authors to win the Grand prix littéraire d'Afrique noire and they possess nonconformist narrative strategies that utilize a powerfully fantastic animal's point of view to paint unsettling social and political conditions in postcolonial Africa. Nganang's subsequent literary and theoretical productions are widely considered similarly iconoclast works in the field of African studies, for they suggest a vision of Africa different from that of the traditional colonial library outlook. His novel *Mount Pleasant* (2011), analyzed here, is a perfect example of such unconventional but pleasing imagination. In fact, considering its narrative architecture alone, essentially made of a masterful interplay of memory, archival features, and creative imagination, the specific intentionality of this novel seems to go far beyond a mere criticism of postcolonial African social and political life and can be read as an innovative cultural history teaching manual.

With its uncanny fictional structures on Cameroon's unusual colonial histories, and by inextricably entwining German, English, and French colonial rulings with that of the outstandingly demiurgic African King-Sultan Njoya, *Mount Pleasant* is a perfect repudiation of the "heroic narrative of western civilization" (Gilroy 197). The novel tells mostly Njoya's bold attempt to build a solid cultural enterprise, the nature of the political and psychological battles between him and the above successive colonial authorities he was dealing with as the sultan of the Bamoum People in Cameroon. The plot is set around the year 1931 and centered on Sultan Njoya's incredible life. In chapter 2, "The Abduction of Someone Else's Daughter" (7–11), and chapter 8, "Girl-Boy" (30–34), we learn that Sara, the main character of the novel, is nine years old when she is snatched away from her family and brought to Mount Pleasant palace as a nuptial gift to Sultan Njoya, the Bamum leader, newly cast into exile by French colonial authorities (7–11). Somehow, Bertha, the matron in charge of preparing Njoya's numerous young brides, changes Sara's female appearance into that of a boy to replace her own son Nebu, who died tragically some years before (32–33). By doing so, she aimed at keeping afresh the memory of him. With this new boy look, Sara witnesses the twists and turns of Sultan Njoya's bold cultural projects, his political demise and exile by French colonial authorities, and ultimately his death. *Mount Pleasant* is not simply a fictionalization of knowledge on African cultural and political life. The novel is also a beautiful snapshot of several emotional patterns that reveal individual and collective memories, the darker side as well as the brilliance of human nature.

What is emotional life? Emotional life could be defined as the condition of a human being to demonstrate states of mind that display emotions and feelings in interaction with self, with other people, and their environment. I am examining the specific question of emotional life in *Mount Pleasant* because the novel is a historical crucible that renders very well affects, time-consciousness, long durée history, the

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making and the preservation of the archives, and their interpretation as a body of knowledge. This discussion is part of a study on Francophone African and Caribbean literature intended to locate timeless and coherent humanistic "Black thought" processes/paradigms—unaffected by biopolitical and geopolitical conditionings that run through these imaginations. These literary universals may signal a third alternative to the competing theoretical positions of Afrocentricity and the Black Atlantic.[1]

Therefore, in this discussion, attention is focused on three points. The first critical question that this essay brings forward is to look at some of the theories of archives, memory, emotion, and the ethical applicability of the concept of dissidence. The second point analyzes the narrative structure of the novel, with attention given to the question of what knowledge archives in literature teach us about emotional life. By doing so, this study is naturally extended to the two cultures debate (C. P. Snow), which asks the central question of whether humanities and sciences should combine their methodologies in explaining human nature. By looking at these storytelling strategies, this study aims, in the third point, to uncover Sultan Njoya's rich life to identify some significant portions of African political history and cultural memory. Indeed, Nganang seems to advocate for an ethics of empathic self-appreciation, compassion, understanding, love, and emotional solidarity.

I. ON THE THEORIES OF ARCHIVES, MEMORY, AND EMOTION IN AFRICAN LITERARY STUDIES

Readers familiar with the historical scholarship of Joseph Ki-Zerbo or Toyin Falola will find in Nganang's novel a refreshing tool because of its imposing artistry to simultaneously weave the psychology of the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial times so well outlined in notable novels such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958) by Chinua Achebe, *Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote* (2003) by Ahmadou Kourouma, or *Morenga* (2003) by German writer Uwe Timm. Three key strata influence Nganang's creative process in *Mount Pleasant*. The first is his philosophical stand on human suffering and recovery. The second is the emotional memories that mold his characters. The third is his empathic writing on the topics of colonialism and postcolonial political challenges and the meaning of cultural rehabilitation of Africans in contemporary emotional life. At the center of the three strata, there is the use of archives as a method of sorting historical facts around Njoya's sultanate. Thus, I shall ask the following questions to elucidate the aesthetic entwinement between archive, memory, and emotion: How should we use emotional life as a tool to understand a character in fiction that uses archives as a strategy of creation? Which theoretical underpinnings could help in such a task? By superbly fictionalizing the sultan's character as a strategy of operations of the functioning of emotions and unconscious forms of mental life in the novel, Nganang does not leave us any room to disregard the fundamental question of emotion versus reason in African studies.[2]

To deal with this problem, let us provide two propositions about the nature of the critic's theoretical task on the fictionalization of history and emotional life. First, literature, as one of the humanities' foremost tools in gauging human

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nature, can help us better understand our innermost beings. Second, by teaching us human experiences in combining tools such as language, history, religion, philosophy, the mental functioning of the mind, etc., literature conveys its messages about knowledge.[3] In reality, these questions of imagination of knowledge in literature, along with other claims that support openly the "disengagement" or "disentanglement" of literature from other forms of human endeavors, are simply the resuscitation of the old question of the *Ars Gratia Artis*. The questions do not really answer the critical problem of whether literature—because it is utilized in a great proportion of the fictional world—can be or should be counted as one of the human creations that advance us as self-actualizing individuals and communities in deciphering the reality around us. At the end of his essay, Wood gives us his responses in the following terms: "Literature is a body of works and fiction names a relation to reality. The terms overlap in much of what they include, but not all literature is fiction, and there are plenty of fictions outside literature. But literature is fiction in the fullest, most powerful sense when it sets out to encounter real knowledge along imaginary roads" (190). This overlapping nature of the literary and the fictional in representing knowledge is skillfully manifested in *Mount Pleasant*, at its fullest, and the question that remains is whether the use of archives as the main fabric in writing the novel make it a reliable location of knowledge on cultural memory and on Sultan Njoya's emotional life. If the answer is positive, how such archival-based cultural memory is then transferred and stored in the minds of readers and how it is subsequently retrieved from the novel for a practical purpose remains to be investigated.

The possibility to use archives as tools of literary creation and production of knowledge calls for the examination of the origins of the archives in the novel, particularly on how the author uses them as experiences of memory. Indeed, Nganang argues that "the vast colonial archives" are an immense contribution colonialism made to African historiography (94). In the chapters "What a Man!," "Sara's Memory," and "Time Regained When You Least Expect It" of the novel, colonial archives are described as "official accounts, biased ethnographic studies, missionaries' circulars, and the administrative reports" (94) constituted by the German, English, and French and now gathered in European, American, and Cameroonian's archives. The author is clear about the origins of these sources and considers himself only as "the mouthpiece for the dusty archives, for the documents eaten away by roaches" (44). In fact, Nganang goes further to write that the study of these archives helped him to visualize and better imagine the famous Bamum monarch: "I was able to reconstruct an image of Njoya" (41); "I saw him … awake at five in the morning," "I saw him standing" (41); "I saw him crumble up his designs and start over," "I saw him pouring over his plans for his new palace," "I saw him examining the sketches, despite the painful distance of banishment, and finding them lacking. Assessing disdainfully *these manuscripts that western archives now guard so jealously*, wanting to tear them up" (42; emphasis added). This idea of the alteration of archives is confirmed by scholarship.

Indeed, in "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits," Mbembe explains that we examine archives to uncover what "life has left behind" (25). The use of archives is a form of debt, and their "manipulation" constitutes the best ways to follow tracks of the past. In this sense, the study of archives is a way to put back together "scraps and debris" to reassemble "remains" to the extent that we witness

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a feeling of the "resuscitation of life" (25). Here the dead are brought back to life because they are reintegrated "in the cycle of time" through the medium of text, an artifact, or a monument, "a place to inhabit, from where they may continue to express themselves" (25).

Likewise, Stoler's work on colonial archives (*Along the Archival Grain*, *Imperial Debris*, *Duress*) cautions us about their "hierarchy of credibility." If they remain a form of vision of the future and a revision of the past, archival records however "register confused assessment" with "dubious credentials dismissed rumors" and ultimately "contradictory testimonies" (Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain* 23). According to Stoler, in themselves, the conventions of colonial archives naturally raise suspicion and ambiguity, considering that the records that kept them alive are filled with "parenthetic doubts about what might be counted as evidence" (23). The credentials of the witnesses oftentimes do not meet the criteria of objective testimonies because they are based on "dismissed rumors" (23). Here, the byproducts of these archives in the mind of people are "imperial debris" because they are "protracted imperial processes that saturate the subsoil of people's lives and persist … over a long durée" (192).[4]

If it can now be said that there are difficulties related to the practical benefits of the archives, we cannot disregard them as useless. In other words, invoking the problem of the credibility of archives without also acknowledging their intuitive capability of bringing back to life some of the forgotten portions of history could be misleading. On the one hand, this claim pinpoints one of the most important aesthetic features of *Mount Pleasant* on the Bamum cultural memory, initiated by Sultan Njoya in colonial Cameroon. On the other hand, the utilization of archives as the main narrative strategy in this historical fiction on suffering, intertwined with the dialectics of inferiority and superiority complexes in a context of colonial domination, has created a formidable problem about the functioning of emotions in the novel. Both problems demand that we take a careful look at the current state of emotional life in the humanities to locate a few ideas that might be helpful for this study.

The crux of this theoretical problem remains in the current extensive study of emotions by the sciences. Thus, if we want to study the emotions from a humanistic angle, this study ought to be naturally extended to the two cultures debate (C. P. Snow) on whether the humanities and sciences should combine their methodologies in explaining human nature.[5] In participating in the conversation, I argue that as a humanistic approach to knowledge, literature favors interpretative judgments in its understanding of power, human life, but the psychological implications of people's lives matter as well and ought to be used in the study of literature.[6]

By looking at some scientific investigations of emotions, one might see the epistemological possibility to satisfy such literary analysis. Accordingly, I look at the possibility of studying African literature using affective theories, with the argument that critical theory, emotional psychology, history, and philosophy can go along in exploring the human mind through literary imagination. Michelle Ty rightly addresses the latter question in discussing the "affective turn" that allows more scholars to work "at the juncture of the humanities and cognitive studies." According to Ty, the science of the brain is now able to efficiently address the "central concerns of human life usually reserved for the liberal arts: consciousness, languages, art, morality, love" (206). Jan Plamper rightly terms this movement a

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"tectonic shift" because it is related to "the present global boom in the study of the history of emotions" (60). Admittedly, this boom has not occurred simply for purely academic purposes, but as a response to the resurgence of emotions such as hatred, envy, loss, and grief in our global society. Plamper thinks we must understand emotions in our public and private lives: "Emotion adds a new dimension" to specific topics such as gender, sexuality, the body, the environment, the understanding of space, and national, global, social, and economic history (63). Let's look at some theories in psychology, biology, and the neuroscience of emotions.

First, in *La Chimie des sentiments* [*The Chemistry of Feelings*] (2012), French biologist Bernard Sablonnière examines the ways emotional states, such as fear, anxiety, attachment, affection, and love, influence our behaviors. He asks: "Comment au travers d'une pensée soudaine, on se sent inondé d'une impression, d'une image, d'une odeur, d'un souvenir ?" 'How, through a sudden thought, do we feel inundated with an impression, an image, an odor, a memory?' (12). Sablonnière argues that what we feel, what our body expresses, come from the different mechanisms of the brain. Consequently, how we tremble, how we are afraid, when we feel hot, or when we have a stomachache are clear keys of the functioning of the emotions in the mind/brain.[7]

Secondly, according to affective neuroscientist Brian Knutson, emotions are comparable to "bridges that connect input to output but are neither input nor output." An input is something like the senses and the output the behaviors we produce. Because they are evaluative, Knutson adds, personal reactions to things or events, emotions coordinate and connect many outputs and, in such contexts, these "emotions produce subjective evaluative reactions that coordinate and channel behaviors." As an emotional state, an affect indicates the description of independent psychological dimensions called "valence" and "arousal." Knutson describes valence as running "from bad to good" and arousal running "from low to high." This scientific description of emotions helps us understand better the novel. When Bertha, the narrator in *Mount Pleasant*, asks Sara, our protagonist, how she feels about the nature of her memories concerning Sultan Njoya's emotional life while living in the Mount Pleasant palace as a young girl, she uses different ways to describe her feelings. The protagonist is extremely good at utilizing different scales of intensities of descriptions or words that allow her to qualify the nature of the goodness or affliction of Njoya and the Bamoun people in her tales but also the low or high intensity of "anticipatory affects" or proactive emotions like anger, disgust, or happiness and euphoria these characters were living. These two dimensions together—valence and arousal—give a good description of these characters' emotional state, particularly because they involve higher positive or negative arousal.

Thirdly, the classical philosophical passions (sorrow, pleasure, joy, pain, love, hatred) represent more elaborate forms of affects than the basic emotions that are involved in a quest to maintain the psychological stability of the novel's characters. Here are a few insights from Antonio Damasio and Catherine Malabou that support this claim. What is very critical here about the two thinkers is that they trace their reflections on emotions in reading the same philosopher (Spinoza) and his philosophy of Conatus—the relentless and innate endeavor for self-preservation and survival as the normal process of existence. According to Damasio, "the simple process of feeling begins to give the organism incentive to heed the results of

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emoting" (284). Here the most important idea to take away is that feelings transform emotions into "concerns" because, as internal simulations, these emotions produce self-attachment.

Fourth point. In reading Damasio interpreting Spinoza, Malabou comes to the same conclusions as Sablonnière and argues that "the systematic unity of emotions and feelings takes place in the brain and remain unconscious for the most part" (Johnston and Malabou 51). If deprived from superior forms of social emotions, such as "shame, guilt, contempt, indignation, sympathy, compassion, awe, wonder, elevation, gratitude, pride," humanity is doomed to struggle for survival (52). In this regard, Malabou makes an important point that will serve us very well regarding the nature of Sultan Njoya's emotional life. Because emotions and feelings play an important role in self-preservation, Malabou contends that when we act to utilize them judiciously in our lives, we maintain the unity of our being: "Fighting against external threats of destruction allows the unity of the individual being to take shape and helps the constitution of the body scheme or schema" (Johnson and Malabou 52). However, what could "fighting against external threats of destruction" mean in the study of a fiction like *Mount Pleasant*? I intend to show shortly that the theory of political emotion can be effectively used here.

At this point, however, it is important to say that the close reading of *Mount Pleasant* suggests that to understand the functioning of such political emotions in the novel, it is perhaps necessary to read Nganang's essays *Principe Dissident* (2005) and *La République de l'imagination* (2009). The above statement leans on the hypothesis that Nganang's call for dissidence as an "act of insurrection" (*Le Principe dissident* 111) to reclaim the African future is related to his knowledge of Sultan Njoya's failed political dissidence back in the 1930s. If the above hypothesis is taken seriously, the intellectual merit of *Principe dissident* might dwell in its constructive philosophy of resistance. Should dissidence be promoted today in African political and social life, insofar as the concept conveys an idea of systematic opposition to authority? Partial answers to the above questions are found in the intellectual history of the concept of dissidence itself. Indeed, Vasily Rudich (2013), Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2009), and Gregory H. Maddox and James L. Giblin (2006) all describe dissidence as a paradigm of progress and liberation. Nganang's essay gives similar ideas of freedom and ethical dilemma when he calls for a "soif d'opposition" 'a thirst of opposition' (101–26). Here, dissidence means disagreement, deviance, risks, and even intellectual rebellion for its connotation of the radical refusal to submit to any authority that hinders people's rights to better their lives. Despite ongoing social and political apathy, some political pundits argue that Africans ought to pursue social peace and respect for institutions, which could foster economic and social growth.

Such points of view are close to those of Sultan Njoya himself in the first half of his reign. He believed that "common sense will prevail" (292, 309) between him and colonial authorities. But Nganang dismisses such positions of the status quo and calls for a new norm of dissident attitudes. Nganang's dissident is rather a hero, the embodiment of persistence and courage whose societal vision makes him or her the natural spokesperson of the people.[8] Indeed, when Nganang shared with his readers for the first time the story of Sultan Njoya in *La république de l'imagination* (21–44), he simply gave an intellectual and political sketch of him. It is with *Mount Pleasant* that we get a complete portrait of the genius that the sultan

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represented for his contemporaries, the astounding cultural memory he launched during his tenure as the Bamoum leader.

In this second essay, Nganang argues that if Africans' destiny was shaped without their consent during the Berlin conference in 1884, and if they barely own their political independence in the 1960s, it is up to them today to define the new citizenship they want to own (109). Thus, Nganang proposes a new African citizenship that ought to be defined in "le ricochet global de nos voix doubles" 'The overall ricochet of our double voices' (108). The first interpretation of this double metaphor may dwell in the necessity of Africans to make their voices counted at the global level, while its second interpretation could be related to Africans and the African diaspora across the globe in their quest to a life of meaning and purpose against racial and economic adversity. The key to the African future, according to Nganang, lies in African people's capacity to invent a new "bank of dreams" (106–07), a universal archive of dreams (124) that fosters an imagination of a new African citizenship: "La grandeur de l'imagination se mesure en effet à ce qu'elle fait sienne les espoirs les plus grands que l'humanité ait jamais formulés" 'The greatness of the imagination is measured by the fact that it makes its own the greatest hopes that humanity has ever formulated' (123). Both essays share the same intentionality of freedom and hope with the novel *Mount Pleasant* in problematizing the idea of what it means to adopt a constructive frame of mind toward evaluating African political and social institutions, from a long durée perspective.

II. THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL: ARCHIVES AND EMOTIONAL LIFE

This part of the essay discusses the notion of reminiscence: which stories/histories does Nganang tell us to *forget*, to *remember*, and *commemorate* from the history of suffering as well as the intellectual and cultural accomplishments of the Bamum people? As an act of recalling or narrating past experiences, reminiscence constitutes a deep mental process that challenges our assumptions about our current perceptions and cognitions. Utilized therapeutically, reminiscence can improve self-esteem and fulfillment when we look back at these experiences. Even in this age of the mind and of sufficient knowledge about the biased nature of stereotypes and prejudices, the weight of race, the perception of history, biology, and geography on our understanding of black people, nature seems to hinder the production of memories as well as the procedures of reminiscence themselves. The global movement "Black Lives Matter" is a convincing example that, assuming that racial bias is over in our communal lives, may simply be wishful thinking. It is for this reason that (African) literary studies, with its metaphorical prowess to garner psychological patterns of human suffering and recovery, could play a major role in understanding human nature.

As the aesthetic entanglement between archive, memory, and emotion set forth the epistemology of living together on the global stage emerges with the question of self-understanding and self-appreciation as a preliminary steppingstone of equality and freedom. In Nganang's view, the political landscape lies in a negative paradox: despite their untenable burden on people's lives, African political institutions—particularly those of Cameroon—continue to oddly set the norms

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of cultural, emotional, and social outlooks. The reading of these essays gives us an understanding of what it means to hold a position of intellectual contestation for the weak and the poor in very effective persuasive language. Nganang revisits the stories of Njoya's invention of the alphabet and the libraries in his fiction and theoretical works with the same fervor because the dream that led Njoya to these creations does not simply help us to dismiss the traditional dichotomy of oral/writing attached to the intellectual history between Africa and the West. For Nganang, such a dream is also a reminder that "l'Afrique a toujours été au centre de la globalité du monde … en se positionnant dans les archives du monde, à la porte d'entrée de notre modernité" 'Africa has always been at the center of the global stage … by positioning itself in the archives of the world, at the gateway of our modernity' ("Le shümom du roi Njoya" 30).

Thus, the novel is equally a fictionalization of emotion, its examination compels us to analyze the functioning of the mind of characters. The study aims at contributing, from an African studies perspective, to the growing field of the global "affective turn" or "emotional turn," in general, and to the investigation of cultural memory and emotions by literary scholars.[9] Besides, Martha Nussbaum or Patrick Colm Hogan have furthered the idea that we should cultivate good public emotions, notably love, compassion, and attachment, in our communal social and political life. These positive emotions can eventually supersede negative emotions, such as fear, envy, and disgust, that could foster national and global understanding. To this call, the study uses Nganang's literary imagination to explore the possibilities of living together as global citizens.

I consider the hypothesis that African writers like Nganang may have their own dilemmas as postcolonial artists of convincingly addressing both local and global readers, but their cunning ability to render the functioning of black people's feelings, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors can be among the basic tenets to address the challenges of African imagined communities. It is for this reason that thinkers such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o or Valentin-Yves Mudimbé are a refreshing reminder of how we should take a local as well as a global consideration in examining with literary imagination.[10] I suggest that this remark on the transnational nature of the work of imagination is applicable to Nganang's novel, despite its seemingly regional setting of the Bamum people in Cameroon. Reading *Mount Pleasant* is not simply a delight for the mind because Nganang is an outstanding writer; this beautiful work of art is also superbly unfused with mixed emotional states crafted around several historical references to African cities, such as Ouagadougou, Dakar, Cairo, Khartoum, Timbuktu, and Yaoundé (122). Other historical references equally include France, the United States, Germany, and England, thoroughly cited, at the end of the novel, as "Acknowledgments and sources" (367–68). With a coherent intertextual mastery, Nganang splendidly incorporates in the novel stories about emotional memories; about arts and material cultures such as sculpture, painting, calligraphy, architecture, and the invention of Bamum syllabary and manuscripts; school programs founded by Njoya himself; his libraries; printing presses; as well as African, European, and American colonial archives.

The novel becomes a "site of memory," as would say Tony Morrison, a form of "literary archeology" that, in addition of exploring the "interior life" of characters, goes to the "site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply" (92). In this regard, the writing strategy of *Mount Pleasant*

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is similar to Werewere-Liking's *La mémoire amputée*.[11] Likewise, Nganang creates one of the most important African artworks in the nature of the fictionalization of African colonial memory, perhaps comparable to that of Marcel Proust's monumental novel *In Search of Lost Time*.[12] The functioning of the two Proustian metaphors of "lost time" and "time regained" of memory run through the novel *Mount Pleasant*. As long as Sara is silent, seemingly oblivious of the past, the time spent at the Mount Pleasant palace is (un)voluntarily buried in her mind. Sara accepts to retrieve from her memory Sultan Njoya's uncommon emotional life with Bertha, the researcher, because of the probable emotional commonalities with the Bertha of her childhood, claiming the latter has transmuted her involuntary memory to a voluntary one. But are we truly witnessing here a voluntary or involuntary memory? There are many reasons to believe that the answer is both, even though the chapter "Time Regained When You Least Expect It" (94–98) leans toward the latter. As the novel continues to enfold the colonial history of the Bamoum people, we follow several narrative threads as guiding voices of this specific African cultural history. Three threads shall be shared here.

The first thread is the present, seventy years after Sara, the main storyteller, is brought to the Mount Pleasant palace. A different Bertha, a scholar living in the United States of America, who also has a nine-year-old daughter coincidently named Sara, returns home to Cameroon to research the origins of the country's nationalism and the history of Njoya's forgotten sultanate. The researcher, Bertha, finds Sara—now old, "mute" for decades, and treated as such by those around her. When the ninety-year-old Sara starts telling her stories, she surprises everyone because she resuscitates life at the Mount Pleasant palace. Her tales are a constellation of memory, fiction, contrasted emotions, and slightly discernible elements of historical objectivity.

The second thread. While the reading progresses, the reader get accustomed to the presence of multiple tenets of the fictionality of history and emotional memory through a set of metaphors built on several lexical fields. One of them is based on architectural technology and describes history as a house of a "Thousand Tales," with several floors and distinctive architectural features. Here, history possesses bedrooms, courtyards, corridors, passages, doors, and windows (361). The lexical field of architecture shifts to a puzzle box and regards history as "a labyrinth," from which a series of memory chains unfolds. The labyrinth gives birth to a bundle of different human habits and sees history as "an agglomeration of whispers, murmurs, gossip, anecdotes, cries, jokes and laughter; a perpetual reminder…" (361), as a "school for the young," and a "projection of dreams," "a banquet of zombies" (361). However, perhaps the best definition of history that helps the reader to grasp the dialectics of reason and emotion in the African history of ideas is the following: 1) "History is the only real judge of our errors and our successes. A cruel master who stands before us. History is our only future" (361) and 2) "Isn't writing history just following the evanescent perfume of someone who has departed? You sense their presence at the end of the trail; you follow the scent left by their footsteps in the dust; you rely on your own memory" (89). The above examples about the evanescent nature of time, space, and the epistemological collapse of the opposition between emotion and reason not only set forth the complex structure of the novel, but are among the storytelling strategies used by the author to unfold the meanings of the novel.

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The third identifiable thread is related to time consciousness—the remembering process, the ways memory is stored and shared in/by the mind in a literary text. Because of the fragile nature of the validity of archives, the writing of *Mount Pleasant* is permeated with contrasted metaphors on time and memory. In his article "Few Thoughts About Memory, Collectiveness and Affectivity," Remy Lestienne looks at the question of "the property of memory" as "strongly entangled with the notion of Time."[13] Lestienne furthers the question by assessing the intriguing problems of "the condition of passage from the short-term memory to long term memory" (2) posed by sociologists, neuroscientists, neurobiologists, and psychiatrists. Likewise, cognitive and affective neuroscientist Elizabeth Kensinger tells us those events with emotional reactions "are more likely to be remembered than events that lack emotional importance" (4).

Since the author uses archives to create these stories, the reading of the novel gives the impression that memory is irretrievably faulty. Besides, the way the protagonist, Sara, tells her stories with intense emotions, as if she had witnessed all of them (105), gives the reader a legitimate feeling that memory is unreliable; the "sincerity of memory" is seriously jeopardized, and the narrator, Bertha, struggles with legitimacy: "It wasn't just the old lady penchant for contradicting herself that made me wary. Mostly, it's that there were mistakes in so much of what she told me, as my research easily revealed" (89). Sara's stories are "cobbled together from disparate pieces, each piece an echo of the many lives she held within her and joined into contrapuntal destinies" (37). However, Bertha is unable to ethically contest the validity of the stories told: "The faulty memory of a ninety-year-old woman put an end to my questions. I preferred to blame her memory—we all forget things" (89–90). Bertha wonders: "Where should I put my trust? In the capricious memory of an old lady or in the colonial archives?" (106). Nonetheless, the "insincerity" of memory is superseded by meaningful images on the dialectics of short-term memory and long-term memory, such as "the gift of time is memory" (13) or "the memory is an archive!" (140). Similar expressions, such as "furious trenches of history" (265) and "in the chatty sub-districts of history" (329), are metaphors that reveal characters' emotionally charged memories. Furthermore, Sara, the protagonist of the novel and only surviving witness of sultan's reign, is reported to be "the living proof of a forgotten time" (13), "the remains of Mount Pleasant" (140), and her body is seen as a "castle of a thousand hushed voices washed up on the shores of time—spoken even when she remained silent" (13).

In fact, the meaning of the semantic field of time and memory of the above locutions indicates that they are simple literary pretexts for the author to tell a remarkable political history of the Bamum people. The process of literary creation in *Mount Pleasant* is one of the most original ways of practicing an effective politics of cultural memory. It is so because Njoya's story unveils an unprecedented cultural and scientific innovation. The historian Judith Njele (2001) has examined the sultan's prodigious intellectual and political life and has concluded that his genius was so ostensibly brought to light because he had a cunning ability to lead his people in new cultural routes with great respect for African cultural roots. As a political leader, with uncanny creative obsessiveness, Sultan Njoya adapted some structural aspects of Bamoun society that needed improvement by initiating a legal reform and new civil code. The sultan also founded an artistic center and reorganized medicine by writing books in that language. The promotion and

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maintenance of cultural memory in Sultan Njoya's palace consisted of a personal library, a collection of leaflets on the history of the sultanate. The portrait the author gives of the sultan lets us discover he was a true cosmopolitan: for his linguistic project, the sultan wanted to invent a language that would incorporate all languages of the Earth, a sort of world language. To invent such a language (Shümum), he combined the languages of his kingdom (Shüpamum) with Fufulde, Duala, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio, and Bali, but also European and Middle Eastern languages, such as French, German, English, and Arabic (202).

For Silvia Riva, the defense of the idea of the legitimacy of Bamoum cultural memory is done with the writing, for example, in 1921 of a 500-page history of the kingdom entitled *Sang'aam* (44) as well as a book on medicine (54). We discover a visionary and inventive leader who gave the arts and architecture priceless value, to the extent that Njoya wanted to build a Palace of All Dreams. One of his dreams was his constant commitment to convince the French colonial authorities with his works to erect the tallest building in Africa: "In secret, Njoya hoped the French would finally give in before him, full of respect, as the Germans for his accomplishments. He hoped they would recognize the power of his vision, and when the Castle All Dreams will be erected, they will call him Master" (292). Sultan Njoya remains today one of Cameroon's national heroes and one of the most famous figures in African history because he gave showed his intelligence through a cultural politics that encouraged respect for traditions while pursuing a bold and progressive ethics of social life. As will be outlined in the third part of this article, this flourishing cultural politics came with a high price: French colonial authorities exiled him and he never returned to his homeland.

I now come the question of the kind of emotions Nganang is asking us to nurture in reading his historical novel. A partial answer to this question is now provided and I shall give another interpretation of the novel by keeping Martha Nussbaum's scholarship on the psychology of emotions in mind. Indeed, what the novel teaches us is not simply a beautiful tale of courage and dedication to arts and sciences, there is also a clear-cut paradigm of how colonial psychology works and the merit of Nganang is to bring back those affective patterns without any feeling of antipathy whatsoever. Indeed, one aspect of this psychology in the novel has been termed by Stoler as "ruination." In its general form, colonial ruination is a process that causes "severe impairment" because it touches the "health, fortune, honor, or hopes" of the "target individual or groups" (Stoler, *Imperial Debris* 196). However, the conceptual ruination is emotionally deeper because it "may condense those impairments or sunder them apart" (196). This is how Stoler describes it: "To speak of colonial ruination is to trace the fragile and durable substance and signs, the visible and visceral senses in which the effects of empire are reactivated and remain. Nevertheless, ruination is more than a process. It is also a political project that lays waste to certain peoples and places, relations, and things" (196). In colonial Cameroon and among the Bamoun people, it is an open secret that the intention of the three consecutive European colonial administrations was to dismantle any initiative of self-reliance in the subjugated territories. They undermined the institutional cultural memory Sultan Njoya initiated throughout his kingdom.

Therefore, what archives in literature teach us about emotional life may depend on the reader's interpretations. However, the reader's responses to *Mount*

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Pleasant are not solely aroused by the subjective relations she or he has with the implied artist who understands the fleeting nature of archives' meaning, but these relations also posit the problem of how to interpret the very aesthetic nature of the affective experiences inscribed in that work of art. The problem of their lack of credibility and their intuitive capability of bringing back to life some of the forgotten portions of history are comparable to the two sides of the same archaeological coin.

III. THE NATURE OF NJOYA'S EMOTIONAL LIFE: THE DIALECTICS OF COMPLIANCE AND DISSIDENCE

The second part of this study aimed at answering the question of what archives in literature teach us about emotional life. I now look at how Nganang reconstructs Njoya's emotional ruination by isolating archival occurrences in *Mount Pleasant* of diverse affects such as motivation, feelings, creativity, cultural politics, and how they lead Sultan Njoya and his contemporaries to desire to be, to have, and do specific political, social, and cultural undertakings in that specific Cameroonian cultural history. The necessity to examine the texture of emotional life is justified by the fact that the working of emotions remains one of the most important fabrics of the literary creative process. By examining some theories in psychology, biology, and the neuroscience of emotions, it was noticed that bringing back the two cultures debate in this study was sound and justified. Let's now examine the nature of Njoya's emotional life. The novel seems to suggest that there are, at least, two reasons that provoked his demise of the demiurge king: the first is political and the second is psychological.

The political reason dwells in the fact that Njoya's cultural creations, symbols of "African modernity," according to Nganang, are obstructed by the very strategic idea that European colonization and its educational tools ought to be the laws of the land for the Bamum people, a direct enforcement of the European "education of desire" (Stoler, *Race and Education of Desire*). If we purport to really grasp the functioning of the colonial psychology in the novel, we ought to delineate two aspects of the problem. The first is the state of the theory of emotion in politics. Indeed, in this part of the study, of the three theories of emotion—cognitive, social constructivist, and political—the third is used. In analyzing the recent political theories of emotion in "Racial Emotions and the Feeling of Inequality" (2016), Janine Y. Kim remarks, "The interesting question that the political theory of emotion tries to answer is not *whether* politics is emotional but *how* emotion affects politics" (482; emphasis added). The choice of the political theory of emotion being in rapport with the first two dwells in the fact that it focuses on "one of the most complex and controversial aspects of emotion: its effects on human action" (485). As such, when looking at the tenets of the *mission civilisatrice* in *Mount Pleasant*, two groups of oppositional emotions govern the dialectics of (inter)actions between the colonizers (a superiority complex and its perceived positive emotional actions) and the colonized (an inferiority complex and its perceived invalidating emotional actions).

The above oppositional emotional dialectics are the consequence of a second element—the nature of the psychology of colonial ruling.[14] The French psychoanalyst adds that although all people were not made to be colonized, some were

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predisposed to be so, on the grounds that European colonizers were actually needed: "on peut dire qu'ils étaient attendus, et même désirés dans l'inconscient de leurs sujets" 'we can say that they were expected, and even desired in the subconscious of their subjects' because legends from these colonized lands prefigured foreigners coming from the other side of the sea would bring them benefits (87–88).[15] So, if the raison d'être of colonial archives in Cameroon was to collect and store information intended to strengthen the biopolitics as well as the geopolitics of the imperial ruling class, such as the one advocated by Mannoni, one of the discernible patterns that transpires in the archives, and thus in the novel, is the feeling of an absolute necessity for colonial authorities, with apparent racial pronouncements, to bring to Cameroonians arts the *mission civilisatrice* that would prevent opposition.

Therefore, Njoya dealt simply with a gargantuan situation to break away from colonialism; it was an impossibility to use the full powers of the intentionality in his actions and speeches. Indeed, in his recent contribution to *L'écriture du roi Njoya* (2015), Nganang confirms these claims about this idea of the colonial constraint of the sultan and the language invention issue. He firmly disagrees with Njoya's German and French specialists, such as Idelette Dugast and Maurice Delafose, whose argument was that Shümum was invented by Njoya with the intention of being used exclusively as a secret royal language. At the defense of Njoya, Nganang posits that a secret language could not be taught in schools for so long (122), even though, still, the students of the schools were primarily upper-class members of the Bamoun sultanate as opposed to those of French schools, whose attendance was compulsory to everyone.

Emmanuel Matateyou, editor of *L'écriture du roi Njoya*, considers that promoting Sultan Njoya's language today represents a major contribution of Africa to world culture and an effort to bolster an African renaissance. For him, the colonial authorities' intentions were unsurprisingly to cause simultaneously Njoya's political and affectual failure. Although all Cameroonian languages were systematically forbidden by colonial powers, the language's repression was more severe in the Bamoun territory: "The presence of an autonomous writing system, a symbol of intolerable sovereignty in subordinate territory. More than a linguistic war, it was a civilization war" (Matateyou 7).[16]

Despite Njoya's innermost desire to realize his cultural and intellectual projects, he did not anticipate the ominous future that was set up against him when he failed to apply Spinoza's ethical philosophy of the Conatus, which as we already analyzed, is the need for an individual to consider self-preservation and survival as a normal process of existence. I suggest that this political impossibility in a dominated land is only the symptom of what Franz Fanon was referring to. Furthermore, Njoya somehow failed to negotiate tactfully the difference between political compliance and dissidence, between dependency and independence. He also misread the idea that the blossoming of a cultural memory and intellectual production comparable to those he undertook were doomed to be strategically undermined, that the only workable available option the colonial authorities had for him was his emotional "ruination" and the sabotage of his cultural enterprise. In the novel, Nganang describes a confidential note found in the archives written by the colonial officer Ripert in his absolute desire to banish Njoya from Fomban, the capital city of his sultanate. Here is how Ripert denounces the sultan: "In his treachery, Njoya has invented a writing system just so he can hide his thoughts

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and actions from us" (320) or "he has invented a language for his people, hoping in his vanity to put an obstacle to the diffusion of European languages" (338). For these reasons, the sultan's political and economic powers are weakened by several actions. First, the colonial administration made restrictions on his trade in the arts, thus reducing his income and limiting his land while raising taxes on his subjects, in addition to forced labor in the coffee and cocoa plantations (266). Second, they closed his schools in 1920, where the political elite was being educated with the language he created, while the attendance of French schools was mandatory. Third, they used stereotypical labels of him being a despot, a slaver, a rapacious potentate, a tyrant, as well as a polygamist, with hundreds of women prisoners in his harem, a king who controls the life and wealth of his subjects because he does not respect human life. When this scheme failed, then the colonial authorities accused him of having conspired to kill the genius sculptor Nebu (308, 322–23).

The other reason for his demise is perhaps attributable to Njoya's subconscious self-sabotage. Throughout the novel, the sultan is the victim of several emotional afflictions. Readers learn that his subconscious mind is burdened by dreary memories (guilt, regret) related to the fact that he betrayed the paramount chief of Douala, Manga Bell, and his close associates, Ngosso Din Samba and Paul Martin. This psychological thread runs throughout the novel and the reader learns that in 1914, German colonial authorities hung them for conspiracy. Before his death, Bell had sent a petition to the grassroots leaders to build a coalition with the intention to drive the Germans out of the country. However, Njoya was "the first to start digging its grave" (191). Blaming "himself for his fateful shortsightedness" (192) and having realized that he was a traitor to the cause of Cameroon, he turns the blame on himself for his fateful shortsightedness, blinded by his friendship with the Germans (192). Nganang writes, "Let's be clear: Njoya was pursued by nightmares. In his nightmares, he saw again and again Ngosso Din, the secretary and emissary of Manga Bell; Njoya had betrayed him to the Germans at the start of the war, an act that resulted in his being hanged for treason alongside his master" (191). This single political mistake became an act of betrayal and exasperated his neurotic situation, which in turn set the fate of the sultan's dual political and emotional demise.

The sultan's inextricable emotional conflicts are described in several chapters, but only two of them will be used here to illustrate the point. Both chapters outline his initial refusal to display the nature of his political dissidence; this bold strategy is superseded, instead, by his desire to comply with colonial authorities. The first chapter is "Talking About Hell" (58–62). Here, the king is the victim of an emotional breakdown that begins with an obsessive repetition of these names, "Ngosso! Samba! Manga!" (59), which, as we know, are the names of the people he betrayed. He then suffers from a two year "unending coma" (99) and "dangerous apoplectic seizure" (258). Despite his miraculous recovery, he struggles to deal with the harmful treatment of colonial authorities and ultimately reaches a tipping point of uncontrollable regret, frustration, and anger. The other chapter that captures this psycho-political demise is unsurprisingly entitled "The Multiple Faces of Powerlessness" (322). Let's read the following two passages from the chapter about his anger that is fueled by powerlessness:

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> It was an anger too large for a burning body. This fire had taken hold of Njoya's body—foreshadowing his fall, yes, his fall—its flames searing his body, licking his chest, veins of fire inflaming his heart, ready to consume him whole, like a mad volcano. The sultan hadn't yet fallen victim to his treacherous body. He could no longer control his hands, that was all. They trembled, trembled. Suddenly all his inventions had become useless, yes, useless. His life had no direction. (323)

> An anger that doesn't reach its target can only be self-destructive. It is born in the gut, takes hold of the throat, and smoldering, dissolves all words. The body becomes its prisoner, for such a rage is like a strangled sneeze … an anger that has grown for as long as Njoya's, anger as vast as the suffering of the Bamum couldn't be calmed by verbal tricks alone. (324–25)

The extended metaphor on the intensity of anger, powerlessness, and the inadequately negotiated emotional conflicts that run through the above excerpts is the result of a powerful dual political strategy the colonial authorities utilized against the sultan: psychological exhaustion and repressed desire. Although he seems to have solidly established his political power, Njoya never took a dissident route and his political strategy that initially fueled the hope that "common sense will prevail" (292, 309) between him and the colonial authorities is never fulfilled. Admirable feelings such as optimism, attachment, courage, compassion, empathy, and quickness of the mind are replaced by negative emotions such as sadness, anger, disgust, shame, and grief in the second part of his life, when the sultan realizes the arbitrary treatment he has received from the colonial authorities. Therefore, one might accept the suggestion that the nature of the internal struggle that arises from Njoya's mind after all these years of domination, his death in exile without finishing all his cultural projects, may seem a catastrophic failure.

However, for Nganang, the critical theorist, the rise and the fall of Sultan Njoya is simply a powerful epistemological challenge for Africans and those living in the African diaspora. As such, the nature of Njoya's cultural productions can be interpreted as a direct consequence of the raise and expansion of globalization. In his article "In Praise of the Alphabet," Nganang considers that the understanding of Njoya's bold cultural politics should be linked to Olaudah Equiano, who, in his *Interesting Narratives* (1789), addressed for the first time the consequences of global reason on the African continent. Thus, the oppositional nature of African literature and intellectual life throughout history should be read as "footnotes to Equiano['s] book" (86). Here is how Nganang explains the connection: "Equiano established the framework from which our responses make sense. He thus defined African literature as an ongoing critique of global reason" (86). Consequently, Njoya's courageous artistic politics may be considered unsuccessful in his lifetime, but the cultural memory born from that genuine artistic politics is still alive today, insofar as such an artistic paradigm "addresses the challenges of our global present" (89). Thus, the invention of a writing system and the establishment of a library by Njoya in his lifetime "was the drive to discover how literature can be produced on the African continent in the first place. Located beyond the *whatness* of the global paradigm, his artistic quest indicates a future we still need to investigate. His anguish in thinking through a writing system still lies ahead for us writers" (88–89). This argument is important to understand the philosophical intentionality of *Mount*

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Pleasant. Nganang seems to suggest that the forms of violence against Sultan Njoya and his people are not intended to dwell in the past suffering of Africans per se. Rather, it is to identify how to cure the current resentful and vengeful memories:

> It is easy to imagine a past world, where a reified African would meet a white man, reified as well, in a tragic duel, in a battle for life or death, the first armed with an arrow and the second a cannon! How naive to put one's feet into the colonizer's chains, to take up once again the struggle of the native man, even though we were born and raised independent! (361)

If revenge and resentment are not the route that the author recommends, what should we advocate for? It was stated at the start of this study that Nussbaum's *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* would play an important role in analyzing the functioning of emotions in the novel. I take ideas such as the "cultivation of sympathy, love, and concern that could motivate a range of valuable action" (378), "emotional solidarity" (379), and "transcendence of disgust" (257) as reading grids of *Mount Pleasant* because they are in alignment with Nganang's philosophy of human nature. Let us look at a possible fictional pedagogy deriving from the above interpretation on the history of inequality, suffering, and recovery as imagined by Nganang. The novel seems to suggest that emotional memory is not free from affective, cultural, and political dominations, and chapters such as "Artists in Politics" (300–06), "Black in Berlin" (102–04), "The Multiple Faces of Powerlessness" (322–28), and "How Can One Be Both Black and Fascist?" (269–75) are exemplary of such an argument. However, the overall tone of the novel seems to suggest that we should cultivate good emotions: 1) we should continually cultivate self-appreciation because historical struggles are powerful stepping-stones of emotional and political recovery and 2) We need to promote political emotions that encourage global understanding.

Let's provide one exemplary case on the author's creative storytelling strategies on the affective dimension of race. These strategies allow Nganang to differentiate the ethics of self-oppression from that of empathic self-appreciation, based on the principles of compassion, understanding, and love. Many sections of the novel reveal this pedagogy in the form of an extended metaphor about love: love "for art, just for art's sake" (214), mathematics of love (107), love of sculpture (145–50), love for dreams (175), love for life (99), love for fantastic stories (117–22), and love for artistic and intellectual life (41, 175). These extended metaphors point toward greater and more powerful metaphors on the complexities of human nature, racial and historical prejudices, but also how to heal them. One of these metaphors on love is created by the author in a context of "disgust" (289) and the "collective humiliation" of the Bamum people (229). Before his death, which triggered his mother to exchange his gender identity with Sara as a boy, the genius sculptor Nebu was in love with an exceptionally beautiful girl named Ngungure. But this girl, who became the model of our genius artist, happened to be the mistress and cook of the French officer of the city, the powerful Lieutenant Prestat. As expected, when the secret love affair between Nebu and Ngungure was discovered, Prestat ordered the colonial soldiers, the unpopular *tirailleurs congolais*, to publicly beat Nebu, tied up to the trunk of a baobab tree, until he becomes "unconscious and bloodied, in her [Nebu's mother's] arms, cuddling him like a baby" (232). It is in these conditions of near-death experience that Nganang develops his philosophy

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of human understanding and forgiveness through the character of Ibrahim, Sultan Njoya's younger brother and intellectual companion. Even though he is also "shocked by Prestat['s] bestial violence" against Nebu (290), Ibrahim remains hopeful that the French colonial administration and Africans could find common ground, on the condition that they associate with women. The paragraph below seems to outline Ibrahim's feminist, cosmopolitan, and post-racial philosophy:

> If women—white and black, German, French or Bamum—had had a voice at the table in those days, maybe colonialism would have worn a different face. Maybe it would never even have existed at all. That's what Ibrahim thought: *love*, and not *war*, would rule the world. And *women* were a *calabash* filled with *love*, etc. To his mind, it was possible to take a moment of *dreadful suffering as a promise of future happiness*, and maybe that's why he paid several visits to Nebu and spoke to him of *conciliation*. No, Ibrahim wasn't a *fatalist*, but hadn't the time come to look for paths toward *peace*, especially after the episode where that boy had almost lost his life? Was Ibrahim a *wet rag*? Far from it! Nor was he a *coward*. But he had lived long enough, and in the company of whites, to know that there are fights worth avoiding because they aren't necessary. (290; emphasis added)

Readers observe how European colonialism created psychological "ruination" (Stoler) in Bamum people's lives. But Nganang seems to recommend that for the sake of their own healthy emotional lives, readers should disregard negative feelings, such as fatalism, submissiveness, fearfulness, cowardice, racial prejudices, and war, and deliberately choose to nurture collaboration, conciliation, love, happiness, and peace—here is the most important fabric of Nganang's philosophy, as seen in the novel—with women at the center of deliberations.

Two ideas could be taken from this study. First, *Mount Pleasant* can be considered a cultural memory device, that the history of emotions from the stories of the novel is a beautiful tribute to the men and women, white and black, entangled in the forces of European colonization. These stories depict distinctive emotional frameworks through which the reader understands the nature of Bamoum cultural memory. These frameworks forcefully describe Sultan Njoya's political and intellectual journey and the people around him as an archaeology of a burning desire to be, to do, and have better lives. This novel is not simply an effort by the author to unearth a critical area of Africa's disabled and occluded colonial histories, but also a recognizable pattern—that of a constitution of robust cultural and intellectual production.[17]

The second point. What do Nganang's storytelling strategies tell us about Sultan Njoya's emotional life, while inventing Bamoum's cultural memory, and what emotions should we nurture in reading his novel? To answer to these questions, it was necessary to know whether archives in literature could teach us something worthy about emotional life. It is possible to advance the idea that *Mount Pleasant* teaches us to understand the complexities of human nature, through the penetrating humanistic worldviews of the author. The distinguishing textures of the storytelling strategies in the novel uncover powerful examples of cultural memory in how to remember and commemorate a forgotten African library. As such, literary imagination of this nature becomes a site of anamnesis of the past and present contingencies of living together. Literary imagination becomes a repository of memory, a locus of creative forces to reinvent the future—metaphorically named "the republic of imagination" by Nganang. In reading a novel about

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archives, memory, and emotional life, the reader hears simultaneously the voices of the novelist, the teacher, the journalist, the historian, the archivist, and the critical theorist, with an optimistic message: we might not want to distinguish memory and reminiscence when facing situations that require us to forget or to remember past pain. As human beings, we have the strength to choose to transmute these feelings of suffering into positive conditions of life, since the quality of such choices after tragedies determine how we ultimately gain and maintain a healthy awareness that fosters a productive life.

NOTES

1. My book in progress, "The Texture of Black Reminiscence: History of Emotional Memory in Francophone African and Caribbean Literature," deals with these historical memories and mental health–related emotions more deeply. These questions are partially examined in my publications, such as "Resilient Strategies and Emotional Memories in Leonora Miano's Literary Writing" (2017), "La résilience dans l'imaginaire de guerre de Tierno Monénembo" (2015), and "Ethics of Resistance and Fictional Minds in Léonora Miano's *L'intérieur de la nuit* and *La saison de l'ombre*" (2017).

2. Indeed, when Léopold Sédar Senghor wrote "l'émotion est nègre, la raison Hellene" 'emotion is Negro, while reason is Hellenic' (*Négritude et Humanisme* 24), the consequences of the controversies that followed this statement seemed to have dwarfed African scholars to a thorough study of emotions. There is a need to stop the epidemiological "litigation" over the opposition between emotion and reason, that is, the long-standing Négritudists' choice of emotion over reason in African thought and their subsequent blistering refutations that have called for the "death" of the famous anticolonial movement by notorious African intellectuals like Paulin J. Hountondji's *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (1983). The assessment of the epistemological challenge with this oppositional discourse is whether we should give Senghor's famous statement the same significant essentialist meaning today. With the contemporary boom of the "emotional turn" and neuroscience and psychology findings on the way the mechanisms of the brain regulate and respond to emotions, there is perhaps a need to review Senghor's famous statement. The prevailing, much-praised everyday language of the "Emotional brain" (Joseph Ledoux) or "Emotional intelligence" (Daniel Goleman) certainly goes beyond the porous racial curtain with its exclusive epistemology and ontology.

3. Indeed, in *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge*, Michael Wood analyzes how the imagination of knowledge works in literature. One of the points that could be taken from this essay is the differences and the commonalities between "literature" and "fiction" and how they represent knowledge. To make his point, Wood quotes Dorothy Walsh's superb *Literature and Knowledge* with the following two questions: 1) "What kind of knowledge, if any, does literary art, afford?" and 2) "Do works of literary art, when functioning successfully as such, have any intimate engagement with what may be called knowledge?" (3).

4. Stoler has subsequently broadened these aphasic states by describing other sophisticated psychological terminologies of colonial histories as "leftovers," "legacies," and the "colonial presence" of imperial pursuits that haunt current lives, particularly in *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (127, 156, 164).

5. Edward O. Wilson argues, "Neither science nor arts can be complete without combining their separate strengths. Science needs the intuition and metaphorical power of arts, and arts need the fresh blood of science" (223). However, philosopher Julia Kristeva considers that humanities and literary critics do not need to blend their methods of investigation with those of the sciences. Kristeva states, "the science of literature is always an infinite discourse, always an open enunciation of a *search* for

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the laws of the practice known as literature" (95) and does not need "to reproduce the norms of Sciences" in order to become a "dignified" part of them, since it is actually the "missing link of human sciences" (98).

6. Patrick Colm Hogan's *Cognitive Science, Literature, and the Arts: A Guide for Humanists* (2003) is an important text that participates in the debate between the sciences and the humanities.

7. Sablonnière believes that "le cerveau n'est pas un simple réseau de connexions, car il réagit intègre, évalue, perçoit, modifie de nombreuses informations qu'il traite, pour adapter nos comportements" 'the brain is not a simple network of connections, because it reacts, integrates, evaluates, perceives, and modifies information that it processes, to adapt our behaviors' (11).

8. Nganang's conception of dissidence is close to that of Egyptian novelist, doctor, and militant writer on Arab women Nawal el Saadawi, for who dissidence and creativity in African literature go along in the process of decolonizing the imagination. Here is what Saadawi writes: "I believe there is no dissidence without struggle. We cannot understand dissidence except in a situation of struggles and in its location in place and time. Without this, dissidence becomes a word devoid of responsibility, devoid of meaning" (157–58).

9. There is indeed a profusion of outstanding books published by African scholars that have demonstrated how African literary criticism has convincingly used all major theoretical frameworks, ranging from structuralism, poststructuralism, postmodernism, Marxism, feminism and queer studies, ecocriticism, and postcolonialism. However, little attention is given by African literary scholarship to the study of emotions and the working of the mind in fiction. Zoë Norridge's *Perceiving Pain in African Literature* (2013) is an important contribution to this discussion on the literary aesthetization of pain and the nature of social suffering, trauma, and silence in African literature in the last forty years.

10. Indeed, in *Globalectics: Theory and the Politics of Knowing* (2012), we learn from Ngũgĩ the organizing principle of the literary imagination as an encompassing force that goes beyond national borders. The critic insists particularly on the obliquity of works of the imagination when we least expect it: "People identify with a good tale and the characters irresponsible of the tale's region of origins" (58). For Ngũgĩ, a work of the imagination is comparable to a mirror or a camera that "refuses to be reveal more than consciously intended" (58).

11. There are multiple similarities between *Mont Plaisant* and *La mémoire amputée*: 1) the strategy of silence adopted by female protagonists, 2) their memory is amputated and transformed by time, 3) the stories of these women challenge official history in archives, and 4) writers both are from Cameroon but live abroad and have adopted their host countries' citizenship.

12. Proust tactfully distinguishes voluntary memory ("mémoire volontaire") from involuntary memory ("mémoire involontaire"). The first intentionally restores the past while the second allows us not only to remember the past by living it through again, but we also appropriate it as our own.

13. Remy Lestienne asks the difficult question, "Can we consider memory as an important attribute of time, in the sense given by Spinoza to the term attribute—an essential property of a substance—without being taxed of illegitimate anthropomorphism?" (1).

14. In *La psychologie de la colonisation* [*Psychology of Colonization*] (1950), Octove Mannoni examined the complexity of the psychology of the dependence of colonized people and argued that many colonized people were voluntarily willing to accept European subjugation. Mannoni writes: "Tous les roitelets malgaches étaient tous très désireux de s'approprier un Blanc" 'All Madagascan kinglets were all very eager to claim ownership of a White' (81).

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15. This question of the *mission civilisatrice* is revised by DeGraft-Johnson in his book *African Glory the Story of Vanished Negro Civilizations*, when he points out remarks made, in 1954, by Thomas Hodgkin, a former secretary to Oxford University. Hodgkin considers that the theory that the penetration of European colonization was meant to bring civilization to "primitive" and "barbarous" Africans is not accurate: "The thesis that Africa is what Western European missionaries, traders, technicians and administrators have made it is comforting but invalid. The eruption of Western European colonizers into Africa … is only an event, though a very important event, in the history of the African peoples" (ix).

16. For Emmanuel Matateyou, from all the linguistic wars that Cameroon was subjected to, the one that opposed French colonial administration to the Bamoun people between 1916 and 1933 was "the most insidious, the fiercest, and the most pathetic, that ended by the death in deportation of a sovereign, promoter of the system of writing his language, King Njoya" (7).

17. When we read the novel with African American novels such as Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Hannah Crafts's *The Bondwoman's Narrative* (2003) in mind, it shows that the emotional life of the characters, the content of their memory, and the spaces in which they live or die throughout history points toward a tight correlation between aesthetic representations of black lives and the value of their consciousness in the economy of human nature.

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