

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### A. Theoretical Framework

According to Stephen Greenblatt the definition of new historicism is a study of the collective making of distinct cultural practices and inquiry into the relations among these practices.

New Historicism developed in the 1980s, primarily through the work of the critic of Stephen Greenblatt, and gained widespread influence in 1990s. New Historicism appeared in response to the New Criticism's tendency to treat works of literature in a historical vacuum as if they were not related to their historical context whatsoever (New Historicism, online).

According to D.G. Myers in his article *The New Historicism in Literary Study*, New Historicist scholars begin their analysis of literary texts by attempting to look at what other text – both literary and non-literary – a public could access at the time of writing, and what the author of the original text might have read (Myers, Online). As an addition, Hunter Cadzow states in his article *New Historicism* that New Historicist critics also place much emphasis on power and power struggle, so the New Historicist seek to find example of power and its disbursement in text. Cadzow also defines power as “a means through which the marginalized seek to gain.” New Historicist seek to find “sites of struggle” to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power (Cadzow, online).

According to Peter Barry in *Beginning Theory*, new historical critics, particularly, Louis Montrose, give “equal weight” on literary and non literary materials (172). It means both literary and non-literary texts can be analyzed together since they can inform and interrogate each other. Additionally, for new historicists history is not merely a background in a literary work. In accordance with the relationship of literary and non-literary texts, this study also takes into account several historical texts besides the movie itself.

Tyson writes that New Historicist differ the traditional historian since these two approaches to history are based on very different views of what history is and how we can know it. When traditional historians ask, “What happened?” and “What does the event tell us about history?” on the contrary, new historicists ask, “How has the even been interpreted?” and “What do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?” in other word the traditional historicist, in viewing a certain historical event, are looking for the accuracy of what actual happens. In contrast, the new historicists are questioning how the event was interpreted and what the interpretations tell us about interpreters (278).

History, for traditional historians, is a series of events that have a linear, causal relationship. They believe that people are capable enough, through object analysis, of uncovering the facts about historical events and those facts can sometimes reveal the spirit of age that is the world view held by the culture to which those facts refer. In contrast, new historicists do not believe that people have a clear access to any but the most basic facts of history. Here, the understanding of what such mean, of how they fit within the complex web of

competing ideologies and conflicting social, political and cultural agendas of the time and place in which they occurred is strictly a matter of interpretation, not fact. Therefore, new historicists are belief that objective analysis or objective interpretations are almost impossible to produce (279).

In accordance to the new historical point of view that any definition is just a matter of interpretation. Actually, as Michael Foucault proposes that what is “right”, “good”, “normal” are matters of definition. We consider these definitions as something “natural” due to they are so ingrained in our culture. Moreover, these definitions are “social constructs by means of which ruling powers maintain their control” (Tyson 282).

In order to analyze history, Tyson writes, that New Historicists believe that “thick description” should be included. The emphasize of thick description is on the meaning of a certain event, and it focuses on the personal side of history. Through close and detailed examination, thick description investigates literary and art works in order to discover the meanings of particular cultural production for the people in whose community it occurred and to unveil the social conventions, cultural codes, and ways of seeing the world that gave that production those meanings.

New historicism believes in plurality of voices, including an equal representation of historical narratives from all groups as it helps to insure that “master narrative”- a narrative told from a single cultural point of view which presumes to offer the only accurate version of history-will no longer control our historical understanding. Therefore, new historicism tries to promote the

development of and gain attention for the histories of marginalized people (Tyson 284). Because traditional historicism tended to ignore or marginalize private life as subjective and irrelevant, new historicism tries to composite for this omission by bringing issues concerned with private life into foreground of historical enquiry (Tyson 285)

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By this understanding, *Braveheart* is assumed conveying the ides of new historicism. *Braveheart* that conveys the representation of William Wallace is interpreted as another version of interpretation, which is different to the version of the official history. However, both literary and non-literary texts are seen equally since both of those are only the matter of interpretation, not the fact.

According to Tyson, new historicist argues that reliable interpretation is difficult to produce. The first and most important reason for this difficulty is the impossibility of objective analysis. As explained above, historians live in a particular time and place, and their views of both current and past event are influenced in innumerable conscious and unconscious ways by their own

experience within their own culture. Another reason for difficulty in producing a reliable interpretation of history is its complexity. While events certainly have causes, new historicists argue that those causes are usually multiple, complex and difficult to analyze, because all events are shaped by and shape culture in which they emerge. Similarly, for new historicists, our individual identity is not a merely a product of society. Neither is it merely a product of our own individual will and desire. Instead, individual identity and its cultural milieu inhabit, reflect and define each other. Their relation is mutually constitutive (create each other) and dynamically unstable (280).

By and large, people know history only from their textual form, that is, in the form of the documents, written statistics, legal codes, diaries, letters, speeches, tracts, new article and the like in which are recorded the attitudes, policies, procedures and events that occurred in a given time and place. Therefore, even when historians base their finding on the kinds of ‘primary source’ listed above, rather than on the interpretations of other historians (secondary sources), those primary source are almost always in the form of some sort of writing (Tyson 233).

New historicism states that historical analysis is unavoidably subjective. It is not an attempt to legitimize a self indulgent, “anything goes” attitude toward the writing of history. The inevitability of personal bias makes it imperative that new historicist be as aware and as forth right as possible about their own ideological positions relative to the material they analyze so that their readers can have some idea of human “lens” through which they are viewing the historical issues at hand. This is called self positioning (Tyson 286).

Mostly, the idea of new historicism is influenced by Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, new historicism frequently addresses the idea that the lowest common denominator for all human actions is power, so the new historicist seeks to find examples of power and its control the text. Power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that I marginalized seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because text is written by those who have the most power (New Historicism, online).

Michael Foucault in *the Archeology of Knowledge* rejects the traditional historian's tendency to read straightforward narratives of progress in historical record. He writes,

Historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the shift and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balance, the irreversible process, the constant readjustment, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movement of accumulation and saturation, the great silent, motionless based that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events (New Historicism, online).

The problem, he argue, is no longer of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits (New Historicism). Instead of presenting a monolithic version of given period, he argues that we must reveal how any given period reveals.

According to Foucault, power circulates in all directions, to and from all social levels, at all times. For Foucault, the representation of things, including history, is the matter of producing power through discourses. He explains that discourse is about language and practices that constructs the topic. It governs the idea that an idea can be meaningfully talked about when it is put into practices and used to regulate the conduct of others. And "...this relationship operates within what he calls discursive formation, the conceptual frameworks that allow some modes of thought and deny others." (Storey 96). What is more, that is nothing meaningful exists outside discourse.

The so called 'fact' is not the absolute sense but of discursive formation sustaining a regime of truth. There are many ways to produce the truth discourse. Foucault argues that this process might be done through the procedures of selecting and divorcing, which one is relevant over the others: by operating the segregation to certain kinds of discourses and making the differences to what might be called true or false, accurate or inaccurate, etc. Finally, new historicism tries to pay attention to the histories but marginalized people.

## **B. Review of Related Studies**

So far, I have already found six sources to support my research on *Braveheart* movie. Those are articles, journals, compilations, arguments, essays, biographies, records and books. Those sources help me to improve my analysis about *Braveheart* movie, especially in my thesis analysis.

The first reason that made me interested in the study of *Braveheart* is the thesis *Chinese Representation in Richard Oh's The Pathfinders of Love: A Reading In New Historical Perspective* by Ambarizky Ayudyah Trinugraheni, who was graduated from English Department Faculty of Letters Airlangga University in 2006. This thesis shows us the different representations between Chinese in the social life using the theory of new historical perspective. In the novel, the Chinese ethnic is described as generous, charitable and caring. While from the official historical accounts the Chinese ethnic is described as un-loyal, selfish, untrustworthy and economically dominating. The new historical perspective theory used in this thesis is one of the reasons why I use the same theory to represent the new identity of William Wallace.

Another study that made me interested in doing a study of *Braveheart* movie, especially in the character of William Wallace is a book *Braveheart from Hollywood to Holyhood* written by Lin Anderson. It was a book that becomes a guide book for the fans of *Braveheart* movie, the book told about the movie phenomenon, discussing the life and legacy of William Wallace through the modern image of the hero as presented in the film. Written with the co-operation of Randall Wallace, author of the screenplay and novelization of *Braveheart*, this is the handbook for *Braveheart* fans around the world. This book also put in some of fans comments all around the world that motivate and admire of the *Braveheart* movie. The comments are collected by Lin Anderson who are creating MacBraveheart sites that accommodate people opinions from all around the world.



Different from them, in my thesis analysis, I am going to attain the meaning of the representation of William Wallace seen from New Historicism perspective; it means that I will try to find how the differences have made a new meaning for other people who watch *Braveheart*. I am interested in doing this study because the film represented the story of the events and character different compared to official historical account, especially in William Wallace representation.