

THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN MODERN HISTORICAL FICTION

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ABSTRACT: *Memory is a complex and multifaceted concept that plays a critical role in shaping our understanding of history. In the realm of literature, particularly in modern historical fiction, memory acts as both a thematic focus and a narrative technique, allowing authors to explore the intricacies of human experience across time.*

Keywords: *historical fiction, authors, , ,*

INTRODUCTION.

As we delve into the world of historical fiction, we encounter how authors weave the fabric of memory into their storytelling, offering readers a nuanced perspective on the past. Burns' poetry is imbued with a sense of national pride, a celebration of Scottish culture, and an unbreakable bond with the land of his birth.

Modern historical fiction often reflects the interplay between personal memory and collective memory. Personal memory pertains to individual experiences and recollections, while collective memory refers to the shared memories of a group, community, or nation. Authors frequently draw on these dimensions to enrich their narratives, emphasizing how personal memories can shape or be shaped by broader historical contexts. For instance, novels like Toni Morrison's "Beloved" demonstrate how individual trauma and memory are intertwined with the collective memory of slavery, illustrating the lasting impact of historical injustices on personal identity.

Findings.

In an age of increasing skepticism toward established historical narratives, many contemporary authors engage in revisionist storytelling, prompting readers to reconsider accepted facts. Through the lens of memory, they challenge dominant narratives and expose the subjective nature of historical recollection. This phenomenon can be seen in works such as Hilary Mantel's "Wolf Hall," where the protagonist Thomas Cromwell's reflections provide a personal take on the tumultuous events of the Tudor era. By foregrounding memory, authors invite readers to reflect on how history is not merely a record of events but a tapestry of experiences that can be interpreted in myriad ways.

Another crucial aspect of memory in modern historical fiction is its inherent fluidity. Memory is not static; it evolves over time, influenced by new information, emotional states, and cultural shifts. Authors often use this fluidity to create unreliable narrators or complex timelines that reflect the fragmented nature of memory. Works like Kazuo Ishiguro's "The Buried Giant" navigate themes of forgetfulness and memory, illustrating how societies grapple with painful histories and the desire to forget. In portraying characters who struggle to hold onto or reclaim memories, these narratives underscore the emotional weight that memory carries. Modern historical fiction often emphasizes memory as a means of connection—linking individuals to their past, their ancestors, and their cultural heritage. Through the act of remembering, characters in historical fiction bridge the gap between past and present, allowing readers to engage with history on an emotional level.

As we engage with these stories, we are compelled to reflect on our own memories and the histories they create, reinforcing the idea that our understanding of the past is both individual and communal, crafted through the lens of memory itself.

Individual memories – and collective memories – are always selective. We have all had that banal experience: we remember episodes we shared with friends or family which they have forgotten. Or vice-versa: they remember things we have forgotten. History is also selective – it is the result of choices,

conscious or unconscious. We choose a subject, a question, a point of view – a view from a certain point. Why do we become interested in a certain subject and not in another? As Pomian recalls, history is selective in a different way to that of memory and selective in a controlled way: the historian chooses the problem, the method to which he will appeal (POMIAN 2007, p. 214). But the historian works with memories – transmitted orally, in writing, manifest or latent in the various vestiges left by men and women of the past. In this sense, he is a debtor to memory. On the other hand, he should not forget that those memories are sources, documents, that to effectively be so, need to be submitted to a critical questionnaire. As the Portuguese historian Vitorino Magalhaes Godinho recalled, they are only sources if they are built and worked on by the historian (GODINHO 2009). This involves making an effort that involves critical distancing, decentering. More recently, Fernando Catroga has highlighted the closer relationship between retrospective memory and retrospective historiography. In his view there are characteristics of memory that are also present in historiographical work. It is a fact that both, history as memory, deal with absence, refer to absent objects. In both there are silences and repressions.

It can be admitted, then, that in a book of fiction, an author reveals himself more than in a book of memories or a diary – as another 20th Century Portuguese novelist, Vergílio Ferreira, suggested on one occasion. I believe so, yes, if we think that in a novel the plurality of voices makes it easier to express intimacy, of that which, in an autobiographical record, tends to be easier to be self-censored or concealed. Novels express moral imagination, multiplying life experiences and experiences lived.

Conclusion.

Memory serves as a powerful tool in modern historical fiction, enabling authors to delve deep into the complexities of how we remember—and ultimately, how we understand history.

In conclusion, by exploring the interplay between personal and collective memory, embracing revisionist histories, acknowledging the fluidity of

recollection, and emphasizing memory's connective power, contemporary writers invite readers on a journey through time that is as emotional as it is informative. In doing so, they remind us that history is not just a series of events but a living narrative shaped by the memories that inform our very existence.

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