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THE PHENOMENON OF LOOKING BACK AND IDEALIZATION: A LITERARY-PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION OF RETROSPECTION IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN PROSE
O‘TMISHGA NAZAR TASHLASH VA IDEALLASHTIRISH FENOMENI: XX ASR AMERIKA NASRIDA RETROSPEKSIYANING ADABIY-PSIXOLOGIK TALQINI
ФЕНОМЕН ОБРАЩЕНИЯ К ПРОШЛОМУ И ИДЕАЛИЗАЦИИ: ЛИТЕРАТУРНО-ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАЯ РЕТРОСПЕКЦИЯ В АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ПРОЗЕ XX ВЕКА

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Abstract

This paper discusses the phenomena of retrospection and the idealization of our past in twentieth-century American narrative literature from literary and psychological perspectives. Retrospection is the process of memory restoration, nostalgia and identity formation in the study of how retrospective narration is used as a mechanism. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby, William Faulkner’s The Sound and the Fury, and Toni Morrison’s Beloved have been discussed in this study in a comparative manner. The thought process is based on a literary theory of narrative time and retrospection and psychological theory of memory, collective memory and idealization which combines the two. The results of the research show that retrospection in American prose is a story-making technique and not only a way of storytelling as a method of narrative device but also as a method of making sense and reconstruction of our own and collective experiences. Fitzgerald describes the past as a pretty idealized vision of the past which is a dreamful and unattainable past of longing and unrealistic dreams, but Faulkner represents fragmented memory and the subjective perception of time. Morrison shows us how traumatic memories still shape our present identity and social reality. Retrospection is the process through which people reinterpret their lives and rethink their past in a literary and psychological way, re-interpret it, define meaning and question what it means to be in touch with history and reality through memory.

Keywords

retrospection, memory, nostalgia, idealization, American prose, narrative analysis, collective memory, identity, psychological criticism, retrospective narration.

Annotatsiya

Nazariy asos sifatida narrativ vaqt va retrospeksiya haqidagi adabiy qarashlar, shuningdek xotira, kollektiv eslash va ideallashtirishga oid psixologik yondashuvlardan foydalanildi. Tahlil natijalari retrospeksiyaning Amerika nasrida oddiy xotirlash vositasi emas, balki shaxsiy va kollektiv tajribalarni qayta qurish mexanizmi sifatida namoyon bo‘lishini ko‘rsatdi. Fitzgerald asarlarida o‘tmish sog‘inch va amalga oshmaydigan orzular orqali ideallashtirilsa, Faulkner ijodida xotiraning fragmentarligi va vaqtning subyektiv idroki tasvirlanadi. Morrison esa travmatik xotiralarning hozirgi hayot va shaxsiyatga ta’sirini yoritadi. Tadqiqot yakunida retrospeksiya qahramonlarning o‘tmishga munosabatini qayta ko‘rib chiqish, hayotiy tajribalariga ma’no berish va xotira bilan bog‘liq murakkab jarayonlarni ifodalashga xizmat qiluvchi adabiy-psixologik fenomen ekanligi asoslandi.

Kalit so‘zlar

retrospeksiya, xotira, nostalgiya, ideallashtirish, Amerika nasri, narrativ tahlil, kollektiv xotira, identifikatsiya, psixologik tanqid, retrospektiv narratsiya.

Аннотация

В данной статье исследуется феномен ретроспекции и идеализации прошлого в американской прозе XX века с литературной и психологической точек зрения. Цель исследования заключается в определении роли ретроспективного повествования в процессах реконструкции памяти, формирования ностальгии и личностной идентичности. Материалом исследования послужили романы Ф. Скотта Фицджеральда The Great Gatsby, Уильяма Фолкнера The Sound and the Fury и Тони Моррисон Beloved. Теоретическую основу составили литературные концепции повествовательного времени и ретроспекции, а также психологические подходы к памяти, коллективному воспоминанию и идеализации. Результаты анализа показывают, что ретроспекция в американской прозе выступает не только как повествовательный прием, но и как механизм реконструкции индивидуального и коллективного опыта. В произведениях Фицджеральда прошлое предстает в идеализированной форме, связанной с ностальгией и несбыточными мечтами; Фолкнер раскрывает фрагментарность памяти и субъективное восприятие времени; Моррисон демонстрирует влияние травматических воспоминаний на настоящее и формирование личности.

Ключевые слова

ретроспекция, память, ностальгия, идеализация, американская проза, нарративный анализ, коллективная память, идентичность, психологическая критика, ретроспективное повествование.

Introduction

The relationship between memory and literature has attracted the interest of scholars in literature and psychology for centuries. Retrospection is one of the most important

strategies of narrative in modern fiction that allows writers to go beyond chronological storytelling and explore personal experiences. Literary characters recall past events, reinterpret personal experiences, and rebuild their identities. Retrospection is a psychological function of self-knowledge regarding the relationship with the past. American literature in the 20th century is particularly notable for its intensive engagement with memory, time, and consciousness. Inspired by the intellectual developments of modernism and later postmodernism, American writers increasingly abandoned linear narrative structures in favor of fragmented recollections, stream-of-consciousness, and nonlinear ideas of time. These narrative experiments were in response to a growing interest in the complexity of human memory and how human beings see, reconstruct, and sometimes idealize the past. Recent studies of memory theory have shown that remembering is more than just a process of reliving information from the past. Memory is a dynamic process of re-interpretation of a past that is not a mere recall of an event in the past. Halbwachs argues that memory develops in social contexts, and that people develop from social frameworks that mold and influence how the past is remembered and interpreted [8]. Similarly, Bergson sees memory as an active process through which consciousness interacts with past experiences continuously [2]. These views challenge the conventional conception of memory as an objective record of past events and emphasize memory as subjective and creative. Retrospection is closely tied to nostalgia and idealization. Research has found that people tend to recall past experiences in a selective way, emphasizing the positive and minimizing the negative, which is referred to as idealization. Boym's theory of nostalgia states that we reconstruct memories over time through longing, imagination, and sentimental attachment rather than historical accuracy [3]. Retrospection in literary texts serves more than simply to capture the past; it provides insight into people's inner lives, reveals hidden desires and motives, and opens up a dialogue between past and present. Retrospection allows authors to explore who we are, how we are, and how we relate to the world. As such, remembering is a selective process and retrospection can be used to examine things like loss, trauma, regret, and unattainable desire. This work analyzes the literary and psychological aspects of retrospection in twentieth-century American literature by way of comparisons of F. Scott

Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, and Toni Morrison's Beloved. These novels are all different types of retrospective narration. Fitzgerald idealizes the past and cannot recover it [5]. Faulkner's fragmented memory and subjective temporality [4]. Morrison's trauma and its bearing on identity formation [10]. Utilizing both literary and psychological approaches, the research aims to prove that retrospection in twentieth-century American literature is a complex process that reconstructs memories, forms identity, and idealizes the past. This study seeks to examine how retrospective narration helps to frame memory and idealization in the American novels of these authors and the literary and psychological aspects of retrospection within these books.

Materials and methods

Qualitative research approach was used based on literary and psychological analysis in this work. The motivation is to see how retrospection is a story and psychological phenomenon in twentieth-century American literature and how it is an aspect of the idealization of the past, memory-making, and personal identity. Three American novels to study: F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby (1925), William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury (1929), and Toni Morrison's Beloved (1987). The three novels are different kinds of literary approaches to retrospective narration and are rich sources for the concept of memory, time, and psychological experience. There were three complementary approaches that were employed in this study. First, close textual analysis was used to examine the passages of retrospective narration, memories, and references to past experiences. This way, we were able to identify the narrative structures through which the selected authors build time relationships between past and present. Second, literary analysis was carried out to identify similarities and differences in the portrayal of retrospection in the three novels. The comparison of the literature revealed the same recurrent themes of nostalgia, idealization, traumatic memory, and identity. In comparison, we study how authors use retrospective methods to achieve different artistic and psychological effects of their work. Third, we use narrative analysis to explore the role of retrospective narration in the overall structure of the text. Nonlinear chronology, flashbacks, fragmented memories, and a change in time frame are examined to understand

how memories are organized and how they affect the reader's understanding of characters and events. Moreover, psychological criticism is a powerful methodological framework. This approach draws on theories of memory, collective remembering, nostalgia, and idealization developed in psychology and memory studies. The notions of collective memory, memory reconstruction, selective remembering, nostalgia, and idealized mental representations offer a theoretical basis to understand the psychological aspects of retrospection in literary texts. The theoretical basis of this work is interdisciplinary examination. Maurice Halbwachs' idea of collective memory is used in the study of social aspects of remembering [8]. Henri Bergson's theory of memory is used to understand the dynamic and reconstructive nature of recollection [2]. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope and Gerard Genette's narrative time theory are literary tools for studying the structure of time and retrospective narration [1,6]. The works of Svetlana Boym on nostalgia, Xianglong Zeng on ideal psychology, and Hakokönga̋s et al. on selective remembering and collective memory serve to provide psychological support in the interpretation of the selected texts [3,13,7]. The analysis is focused on three different categories: nostalgia as a narrative strategy, memory as a reconstructive process, and idealization as a psychological response to past events. These categories act as analytic lenses in which the chosen novels are considered.

Literature review

By combining literary and psychological methods, we hope to provide a full understanding of how twentieth-century American literature tells us about memory, identity, and the idealized past in the present. Retrospection has received a lot of attention in literary research, psychology, and memory research since it is at the intersection of literature with human memory understanding and human cognition. Retrospection has been approached through different perspectives by scholars, and there is a general understanding that remembering is not just the process of recalling but also of reconstruction and rethinking of past memories. Maurice Halbwachs introduced the idea of collective memory to memory research, and it was a very good start. Halbwachs argues that individual memory is not divorced from social frameworks because people recall the past in the cultural, historical, and social context in which they live. Memory is thus not

only a product of personal experience but also of collective values, beliefs, and stories [8]. This is particularly true in novels where characters are socialized and interpreted in this way in the past. Halbwachs' theory provides a framework for understanding how memories in fiction are not only the product of individual memories but more generally of the culture. Henri Bergson made a series of philosophical and psychological arguments about memory. He argued that memory is a process that is dynamic and active and not a passive storage system. Bergson maintained that past experiences are always present in consciousness and influence present perception. So remembering is an ongoing interaction between past and present. This understanding of memory is of particular relevance in literature where time is fluid and characters move from past to present in a narrative that has a way of moving between one place and another [2]. The story of retrospection has been studied a great deal in literary theory. Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope concept emphasizes the intertwined relationship between time and space in literature. In his view, structures of time decide what is said in the narrative and how people experience reality [1]. Retrospective narration often creates complex chronotopes in which the past and present relate to one another, allowing readers to perceive multiple temporal layers simultaneously. Gerard Genette provided his analysis of narrative time in the context of his theory of narrative discourse, which includes analepsis or flashback, as it is required to break up chronological order in order to present earlier events. Genette's classification of temporal structures has become one of the most influential tools for analyzing retrospection in literature [6]. As an analepsis, authors can reveal much more about past and present and make connections between past and present. The psychological aspects of remembering have also been studied by many researchers in the memory field. Hakoköngäs, Kleemola, Sakki, and Kivioja have argued that memory is characterized by selective remembering and selective forgetting. Their research shows that people and societies tend to keep certain aspects of the past while minimizing or excluding others [7]. Such selectivity is crucial for defining the dominant narrative and the interpretation of historical events. This is particularly true for the reader in reading a book and reading literature in which the writer is trying to make sense of the past. Memory and idealization are further discussed with nostalgia, which Svetlana Boym defines as a longing for a lost

home, time, or experience that can never be fully recovered. Restorative nostalgia (reclaiming the past) and reflective nostalgia (remaking the past) are terms she uses to distinguish between both. Boym's theory is especially useful for literary analysis since many retrospective narratives are not founded on historical fact but on the feelings of attachment to an idealized past [3]. Another important contribution is that of Xianglong Zeng, who developed an ideal psychology theory. Human beings are naturally oriented toward ideal mental states and ideal versions of reality, and they understand things as they are [13]. In other words, people think of things as aspirational, values, and dreams. And so retrospective narratives often turn ordinary situations into meaningful or idealized ones. From this perspective, idealization is more than a distortion but rather a psychological mechanism through which people create coherence and significance in their lives. Taken together, these theories demonstrate retrospection to be a very wide-ranging phenomenon, as a story of narrative structure, memory reconstruction, social influence, nostalgia, and psychological idealization. Yet relatively few studies have combined literature and psychology to study how retrospection contributes to the narrative and the nostalgic in twentieth-century American novels. By drawing on the theoretical perspectives of literature and memory about the history of these literary and psychological approaches, we are able to bridge this divide.

Results and discussion

Retrospection has been considered a multi-faceted literary technique in the literature of the chosen novels and while each book uses a different narrative technique for the protagonist (Fitzgerald, Faulkner, Morrison) in the past, the past is present in the present and a factor with which to shape our consciousness. One of the best examples of idealized retrospection of a novel is F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby in which Jay Gatsby is haunted by a memory of Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby's memories are not objective ones of past events; as such, they are idealized images based on longing, hope, and emotional attachment. His vision of Daisy gradually becomes inseparable from his vision of success, happiness, and personal fulfillment. And thus the past is reconstructed as this perfect reality that never existed. Gatsby's thought process is as much about our tendency to imagine back in time as it is about the present to have a sense of it. His famous assertion

that the past can be repeated shows the power of nostalgic idealization. In so doing, the novel illustrates how nostalgia can lead to a mistake between memory and desire. But Fitzgerald does not depict memory as a historical reality but rather as a subjective construct created by emotional needs and unrealized dreams. Retrospection is a source of motivation and a source of personal tragedy, in this way [5]. Fitzgerald is obsessed with idealization, while Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury is about the fragmentation of memory and temporal instability. The novel does not follow the standard chronology but rather shows events from different perspectives and is presented with a discontinuous view of history and times. The characters move back and forth between the present and past, and it is a story that mirrors human consciousness very well. Faulkner's memory model is very similar to psychological theories that recall as a reconstruction process [4]. The characters are not able to recall the events in order to make sense of them, and memories come by association, emotion, and sensory impressions. The past is always there and with it the present, and we can't separate time at all. In this sense, retrospection in the novel is less nostalgic reflection and more a manifestation of psychological fragmentation. Quentin Compson is particularly emblematic of such a thing. The obsessive loyalty to family history and lost values he feels emotionally debilitating is a testament to the painful nature of memory. Quentin's inability to reconcile past and present experiences creates a distorted perception of time and that's when memories really matter to him. In such representations, Faulkner shows that retrospection can lead not only to idealization but also confusion, anxiety, and psychological fragmentation. A different kind of retrospection is involved in Toni Morrison's Beloved, in which memory is intimately linked with trauma and collective history [10]. Unlike Gatsby's nostalgic longing and Quentin's fragmented consciousness, Beloved's characters have painful memories that cannot be suppressed. The past is not forgotten voluntarily, but comes back and keeps coming back to present-day life with a constant impact.

Morrison portrays memory as a living thing that shapes the self and a community. The memories of slavery are still in our personal consciousness and our community history, and traumatic events cannot simply be ignored. Retrospective narration allows the novel to show stories that have been forgotten by more mainstream historical narratives.

Structured through traumatic memory reconstruction, Morrison examines the psychological consequences of violence, loss, and displacement. From a literary point of view, the structure of Beloved shows how retrospective narration can upend linear historical narrative [10]. The novel slowly reconstructs past events through fragments of memory, and readers learn to see trauma and recall in a different light. So remembering becomes a process of healing and learning. Unlike Gatsby's attempt to rebuild an idealized past, Morrison's characters will have to confront and come to terms with painful experiences to move forward. Though they appear to be quite different, the three novels share some major characteristics. Retrospection is a way of creating identity. Characters are people who are defined by how their remembered experiences are idealized; not only are they idealized, fragmented, or traumatized, but often also as a part of the past, their relationship to their memories. Second, memory is always seen as a reconstruction, not the reproduction of memories, of course, as it is usually framed as a reconstruction, not a reproduction. The past is not retrieved as a memory of the past but a reconstruction of the present, but one reinterpreted in the present, in a way that transforms one's previous emotions, desires, and psychological state of mind and personality. Retrospection shows us how memory is shaped in a complex way by the interplay of individual memory with contemporary cultural or historical contexts. The comparison of historical and literary criticism with psychological theory also indicates the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to the development of literature and psychology in relation to this kind. Theories about collective memory, nostalgia, selective remembering, and idealization are very useful to understand how retrospective narration works. The novels we consider demonstrate that retrospection is not only a storytelling technique. But it is also a very literary-psychological phenomenon in which we construct meaning, negotiate our identity, and reinterpret our experiences over time. Our findings thus reinforce the idea that retrospection is central to twentieth-century American literature. Through various forms of narrative, Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Morrison show how memory shapes human consciousness and how the past still shapes our reality today. Their works show that retrospection is a creative skill, a cognitive process, and also a psychological response to the challenges of human existence. The present study explored the role of retrospection

and the idealization of the past in twentieth-century American literature from a literary-psychological perspective. From the perspective of F. Scott Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, William Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, and Toni Morrison's Beloved, retrospection is not so much about the story as it is a way of remembering. From these works, we can see that memory in literary texts is an emotional process as it is based on emotions, desires, personal experiences, and social influences. In Fitzgerald's book, retrospection is very much associated with nostalgia, the notion of being in a lost past. Gatsby's quest for lost experience shows how memory can be made into an idealized vision and not real. Faulkner makes retrospection a fragmented experience and nonlinear time with the idea of memory being unstable and subjective. Morrison's Beloved goes a step further by showing how traumatic memories are still affecting individual and collective identity long after the trauma has happened. This study further demonstrates that retrospection is indeed a central component of literary discourse. It is a source for character development, revealing hidden psychological conflicts and establishing meaningful connections between past and present experiences.

Conclusion

Retrospection in historical storytelling helps to shed light on more than the basic points of identity formation, cultural memory, historical consciousness, and emotional experience. From a theoretical point of view, literary and psychological perspectives can better explain retrospective narration in the world. It is what collective memory, nostalgia, memory reconstruction, selective remembering, and idealization do that we know so much about why characters see the past as different from what is actually happening. Retrospection is not just a stylistic device but one that is cognitive and emotional in nature as a way to construct meaning and interpret life. In the end, twentieth-century American literature presents retrospection as a powerful instrument for exploring the complexities of memory and human consciousness. Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and Morrison show us that the past is still present in the present, still in the process of shaping our identity, perception, and experience. Looking back and idealization are central to literary representation and psychological reality.

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