



UDC:42+418

Contemporary Biofiction and Its Prominent Representatives

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Abstract

Contemporary biofiction is a literary genre that combines historical facts with fictional elements in order to represent the lives of real historical figures, while allowing authors creative freedom to explore emotions, motivations, and untold perspectives. This genre has gained popularity in recent decades due to readers' growing interest in history presented through engaging narrative forms. The present article examines the defining features of contemporary biofiction, its educational and literary value, and the works of its most prominent representatives. Special attention is given to how biofiction reshapes the perception of historical personalities and contributes to modern literary discourse.

Keywords: biofiction; contemporary literature; historical figures; narrative fiction; literary interpretation; modern novel

Introduction

Modern literature reflects society's changing relationship with history and identity. Readers today seek not only factual accuracy but also emotional depth and personal perspectives. This tendency has contributed to the growing popularity of biofiction as a genre that stands between biography and fiction (Fiveable, 2023). And unlike traditional biography, biofiction allows authors to interpret historical gaps creatively while remaining grounded in historical context. Scholars note that such narratives encourage readers to think critically about how historical lives are reconstructed in literature (Lackey, 2016).

Аннотация

Современная биофикция представляет собой литературный жанр, который сочетает исторические факты с вымышленными элементами с целью изображения жизни реальных исторических личностей, предоставляя авторам творческую свободу для исследования эмоций, мотивов и малоизвестных аспектов их биографий. В последние десятилетия данный жанр приобрёл популярность благодаря возросшему интересу читателей к истории, представленной в увлекательной повествовательной



форме. В настоящей статье рассматриваются основные особенности современной биофикции, её образовательная и литературная ценность, а также творчество наиболее известных представителей жанра. Особое внимание уделяется тому, как биофикция переосмысливает восприятие исторических личностей и способствует развитию современного литературного дискурса.

Ключевые слова: биофикция; современная литература; исторические личности; повествовательная проза; литературная интерпретация; современный роман.

Введение

Современная литература отражает изменяющееся отношение общества к истории и идентичности. Сегодня читатели стремятся не только к фактической достоверности, но и к эмоциональной глубине и личностному восприятию прошлого. Эта тенденция способствовала росту популярности биофикции как жанра, находящегося на границе между биографией и художественной прозой (Fiveable, 2023). В отличие от традиционной биографии, биофикция позволяет авторам творчески интерпретировать пробелы в исторических данных, оставаясь при этом в рамках исторического контекста. Исследователи отмечают, что подобные произведения побуждают читателей критически осмысливать способы литературного воссоздания исторических жизней (Lackey, 2016).

Annotatsiya

Zamonaviy biofiktsiya tarixiy faktlar va badiiy to'qima unsurlarini birlashtirgan adabiy janr bo'lib, real tarixiy shaxslarning hayotini tasvirlashda mualliflarga ularning his-tuyg'ulari, motivlari va kam yoritilgan jihatlarini ijodiy talqin qilish imkonini beradi. So'nggi o'n yilliklarda ushbu janr tarixni qiziqarli badiiy shaklda taqdim etishga bo'lgan o'quvchilar qiziqishining ortishi tufayli keng ommalashdi. Mazkur maqolada zamonaviy biofiktsiyaning asosiy xususiyatlari, uning ta'limiy va adabiy ahamiyati hamda eng mashhur vakillarining asarlari tahlil qilinadi. Shuningdek, biofiktsiyaning tarixiy shaxslarni qayta talqin qilishdagi roli va zamonaviy adabiy diskursga qo'shgan hissasiga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: biofiktsiya; zamonaviy adabiyot; tarixiy shaxslar; badiiy rivoyat; adabiy talqin; zamonaviy roman.

Kirish

Zamonaviy adabiyot jamiyatning tarix va shaxsiylikka bo'lgan munosabatidagi o'zgarishlarni aks ettiradi. Bugungi kunda o'quvchilar nafaqat faktlarga asoslangan aniqlikni, balki hissiy chuqurlik va shaxsiy nuqtayi nazarni ham izlaydilar. Ushbu holat biofiktsiyaning biografiya va badiiy adabiyot o'rtasida joylashgan janr sifatida mashhurligining oshishiga sabab bo'ldi (Fiveable, 2023). An'anaviy biografiyadan farqli o'laroq, biofiktsiya mualliflarga tarixiy ma'lumotlardagi bo'shliqlarni ijodiy tarzda



to'ldirish imkonini beradi, biroq tarixiy kontekst doirasida qoladi. Tadqiqotchilar bunday asarlar o'quvchilarni tarixiy hayotlarning adabiy qayta yaratilishini tanqidiy tahlil qilishga undashini ta'kidlaydilar (Lackey, 2016).

Main Part

Contemporary biofiction is characterized by its focus on real individuals who played important roles in cultural, political, or artistic history. These individuals may include writers, artists, scientists, or political leaders. While the central characters are historically real, the narrative often includes imagined dialogues, reconstructed scenes, and subjective perspectives. This allows authors to fill gaps in historical knowledge and present alternative viewpoints. One of the most distinctive features of biofiction is its emphasis on interiority. Writers frequently explore the psychological and emotional lives of their characters, presenting them as complex and flawed human beings rather than idealized historical icons. This approach encourages readers to empathize with figures from the past and to reconsider their public images. For example, biofiction often portrays famous authors not only as literary geniuses but also as individuals struggling with personal doubts, social pressures, and creative challenges.

Among the most prominent representatives of contemporary biofiction is Hilary Mantel, whose novels *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* focus on the life of Thomas Cromwell, a key political figure in Tudor England. Mantel's works are widely praised for their meticulous historical research combined with vivid storytelling. Although Cromwell is a historical figure, Mantel reimagines his inner thoughts and motivations, offering a fresh perspective on well-known historical events. Another significant figure in contemporary biofiction is Michael Cunningham, particularly through his novel *The Hours*. This work interweaves the life of the modern writer Virginia Woolf with fictional characters influenced by her novel *Mrs Dalloway*. Cunningham's approach demonstrates how biofiction can connect past and present, showing the lasting impact of historical figures on contemporary life and literature.

Female historical figures have also become central subjects in contemporary biofiction. Novels such as *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier, which reimagines the life of the painter Johannes Vermeer and his fictional relationship with a young servant, demonstrate how authors blend historical context with imaginative storytelling. Although the servant girl is fictional, the novel offers insight into the artistic world of the Dutch Golden Age and raises questions about gender, class, and creativity.

From an educational perspective, biofiction holds particular value. It encourages readers to engage critically with history and to question how narratives are constructed. In literature classrooms, biofiction can be used to stimulate discussion about the reliability of historical sources, the role of imagination in literature, and the ethical responsibility of writers when representing real individuals. Students often find biofiction more engaging than traditional historical texts, as it presents history through compelling narratives and relatable characters.



Despite its strengths, contemporary biofiction also raises certain challenges. Critics argue that the blending of fact and fiction may confuse readers or distort historical truth. However, many authors openly acknowledge the fictional nature of their narratives and encourage readers to view their works as interpretations rather than factual records. This tension between accuracy and creativity is one of the defining characteristics of the genre and contributes to its richness and complexity.

Conclusion

Contemporary biofiction represents an important development in modern literature, offering innovative ways to explore history through narrative imagination. By focusing on the personal and emotional lives of historical figures, biofiction humanizes the past and makes it accessible to contemporary readers. The works of authors such as Hilary Mantel, Michael Cunningham, Colm Tóibín, and Tracy Chevalier demonstrate the genre's literary value and versatility. Although biofiction challenges traditional notions of historical accuracy, it encourages critical thinking and deeper engagement with both literature and history. As a result, contemporary biofiction continues to play a significant role in shaping modern literary discourse and educational practice. From an educational perspective, biofiction is valuable because it encourages critical reading and interpretation. Students learn to distinguish between historical fact and literary imagination, which enhances analytical thinking (British Library, 2022).

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