

} Summary

Writing History: Literary Performative Strategies

Writing History: Literary Performative Strategies describes how historical themes are presented in literary works and characterizes the mechanisms underlying these procedures. The book's purpose is not to replace historical research or source knowledge. Literature does not confirm or authorize events and facts from the past, but presents them in a manner appropriate to its genre and stylistic needs. It also emphasizes how writing history is a form of creation, filled with "literary artifacts", whose authors (including professional historians) have demonstrated literary talents.

These detailed observations were inspired by the works of Hayden White, Paul Ricoeur, and Richard Rorty, and allow us to see history writing not only as an artistic (literary) act but also as a social one—one that arises from "agreements" (contracts) between writers and readers. These agreements concern both the understanding of historical processes, events and facts, as well as what we call "historical truth." It emerges not from individual statements or discourses, but from interpretations in dialogue with one another. These utterances are not indifferent, because they constitute a tool for exercising power and social control. They are necessary to present and perpetuate a version of the past that sustains or reshapes collective memory. In this sense, they are an act of creating history—performing it in accordance with, or against, collective expectations—and the stylistic and generic assumptions of literary works.

The book consists of two parts. Part One describes the narrative practices used to present history. It argues that these are based on

a combination of referential and textual planes (frameworks). At the centre of the referential plane is the protagonist, or hero, since it is his adventures that are narrated and influence the stylistic and formal shape of the work. The hero can be classified into five structural variants, following the classification established by Northrop Frye: the mythical hero (the divine being); the romance hero; the historical hero (highly imitative works—"high mimetic"—faithfully depicting the adventures of historical figures); the "ordinary hero" (appearing in low imitative genres—"low mimetic"—whose object is not to faithfully imitate his actions); and the "ironic hero" (incapable of action, characterized by numerous social deficits, also comic). The textual framework, on the other hand, is based on integrating rhetoric, poetics and intertextual connections (references to other works), and allows for placing the protagonist within the work's stylistic and generic framework. The combination of both frameworks—referential and textual—creates the conditions for the emergence of performative strategies that enable the presentation of historical events and facts in complementary, polemical, and even contradictory ways.

The second part of the book analyses strategies related to writing history and shows how they boil down to writing: myths (both canonical and non-canonical), legends (perpetuated in chivalric and hagiographic epics), highly imitative forms (exemplified by both reportage and *silva*), low-imitative forms (based on literary fiction), and ironic forms (presenting an alternative, often comic, version of historical events). By analysing works from different periods, linguistic systems, and traditions, it is possible to characterize recurring genres and stylistic-formal solutions. These allow us to identify ten performative strategies: (1) the "transfer" strategy, which consists in shifting stylistic and compositional features between historical and literary discourses; (2) the "location" strategy, which consists in presenting characters in a way that enhances or detracts from their imagery; (3) the "hybrid" strategy, which focuses on compiling characters arriving from various stylistic, linguistic, and generic traditions; (4) the "compensatory strategy", which facilitates the creation of representations of the past based on incomplete accounts that constitute fragments of larger wholes; (5) the "dramatic" strategy, which consists in dramatizing told stories; (6) the "updating" strategy, which involves modernizing history; (7) the "pragmatic" strategy, which allows for the use of literary fiction

(proper names of characters) in social circulation (as names of streets, schools, institutions, etc.); (8) the “mnemonic” strategy, which enables the memorization and recollection of historical events; (9) the “ironic” strategy, which counters serious or heroic interpretations; (10) the “game” strategy, which is based on the belief that telling/writing history is a kind of “game” between senders and recipients, occurring within the framework of established (developed) social contracts.

Performative strategies enter into numerous relationships with one another: they complement each other, compete with each other, and form lasting and situational coalitions. The synergies that arise between them allow for the transfer of images of the past into collective memory and serve social, cultural, and identity-related purposes; as such, they are expected and necessary. They are based on the belief that establishing contact with the past can yield something significant for the present, and perhaps even that history, as Cicero advocated in *De orator*, can be a teacher of life.