

# THE PRAGMATICS OF NOSTALGIA IN JULIAN BARNES' ARTHUR & GEORGE

## A PRAGMÁTICA DA NOSTALGIA EM ARTHUR & GEORGE, DE JULIAN BARNES

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### Abstract

This study investigates the role of nostalgia in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, examining its impact on character development and narrative structure. The novel intertwines the lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, using nostalgia to explore themes of identity, memory, and societal context. By analyzing key passages, this research reveals how nostalgia shapes the

### Resumo

*Este estudo investiga o papel da nostalgia em Arthur & George, de Julian Barnes, examinando seu impacto no desenvolvimento dos personagens e na estrutura narrativa. O romance entrelaça as vidas de Arthur Conan Doyle e George Edalji, utilizando a nostalgia para explorar temas de identidade, memória e contexto social. Ao analisar passagens-chave,*



characters' motivations and perceptions, particularly in their pursuits of justice and belonging. Arthur's idealized recollections of the past inspire him to support George, whose experiences highlight the complexities of racial and social identity in early 20th-century England. This dynamic between personal and collective memory emphasizes nostalgia's broader historical implications, illustrating its influence on individual experiences and societal narratives. Additionally, the paper discusses how readers engage with nostalgia, showcasing Barnes' ability to prompt reflections on their own memories and identities. Ultimately, this analysis highlights nostalgia as a significant pragmatic force within the novel, providing insights into the intricacies of human emotion and the construction of historical consciousness. By exploring these themes, the study enhances the understanding of the thematic depth in Barnes' work and the wider implications of nostalgia in literature. Through its exploration of these elements, the research contributes to a richer comprehension of how nostalgia shapes narrative and character in *Arthur & George*.

**Keywords:** Nostalgia. Pragmatics. Julian Barnes. *Arthur & George*. Memory. Identity.

*esta pesquisa revela como a nostalgia molda as motivações e percepções dos personagens, particularmente em suas buscas por justiça e pertencimento. As lembranças idealizadas do passado de Arthur o inspiram a apoiar George, cujas experiências destacam as complexidades da identidade racial e social na Inglaterra do início do século XX. Essa dinâmica entre memória pessoal e coletiva enfatiza as implicações históricas mais amplas da nostalgia, ilustrando sua influência nas experiências individuais e nas narrativas sociais. Além disso, o artigo discute como os leitores se envolvem com a nostalgia, demonstrando a capacidade de Barnes de provocar reflexões sobre suas próprias memórias e identidades. Em última análise, esta análise destaca a nostalgia como uma força pragmática significativa dentro do romance, fornecendo insights sobre as complexidades da emoção humana e a construção da consciência histórica. Ao explorar esses temas, o estudo aprimora a compreensão da profundidade temática na obra de Barnes e as implicações mais amplas da nostalgia na literatura. Por meio da exploração desses elementos, a pesquisa contribui para uma compreensão mais rica de como a nostalgia molda a narrativa e os personagens em *Arthur & George*.*

**Palavras-chave:** Nostalgia. Pragmática. Julian Barnes. *Arthur & George*. Memória. Identidade.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George* intricately weaves the historical and fictional lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, set against the backdrop of early 20th-century England. At the heart of this narrative lies the theme of nostalgia, which serves as a potent prism through which the characters' identities, motivations, and experiences are illuminated. Nostalgia, often characterized as a longing for the past, transcends mere sentimentality in Barnes' work; it emerges as a complex pragmatic force that shapes not only individual lives but also collective memory and societal values. As Salmose (2018) notes, "nostalgia can serve as a lens through which we scrutinize not only our past but also the societal constructs that define our present" (p.15).

In the novel, Arthur Conan Doyle is depicted as a man grappling with his own successes and failures. His nostalgic reflections on a more idealized Victorian society

propel him into a quest for justice on behalf of Edalji, a man wrongfully accused of a crime largely due to his racial identity. This interplay between nostalgia and justice illustrates how personal memories can inform ethical decisions, highlighting the moral dilemmas faced by characters navigating a rapidly changing world. George Edalji, on the other hand, embodies the struggles of marginalized individuals whose longing for acceptance and recognition is colored by societal prejudice. His nostalgia for a more inclusive society underscores the intersection of personal and collective identities, shedding light on the broader implications of race and belonging. As Stewart (1993) articulates “nostalgia is a longing for a past that never existed, a yearning for a world that can never be reclaimed” (p.23).

Barnes skillfully employs nostalgia not only to develop his characters but also to invite readers into a reflective engagement with their own memories and identities. As the narrative unfolds, readers are prompted to consider how nostalgia shapes their perceptions of the past and informs their present. This engagement emphasizes the relevance of memory in understanding human emotion, identity construction, and the complexities of historical representation. Mey (2001) asserts that “the understanding of meaning is profoundly influenced by the context in which it is situated” (p.6), further emphasizing the contextual nature of nostalgia in Barnes’ narrative.

The significance of nostalgia in *Arthur & George* extends beyond the characters’ individual experiences. It serves as a commentary on the societal landscape of the time, illustrating how historical context influences personal narratives. By situating nostalgia within both personal and collective frameworks, Barnes invites a deeper exploration of how memory and identity are interwoven, ultimately revealing the multifaceted nature of human experience. This paper aims to dissect the pragmatic dimensions of nostalgia in *Arthur & George*, offering insights into its role as a critical narrative device that enriches the thematic depth of Barnes' work. As Davis highlights (1979), “nostalgia is not merely a yearning for the past; it is a complex interplay of memory, identity, and societal values” (p.15).

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Nostalgia, as a multifaceted concept, has been extensively explored in literary studies, particularly in relation to character motivation and identity formation. In Julian

Barnes' *Arthur & George*, nostalgia acts not only as a personal emotional experience but also as a collective societal phenomenon that shapes the identities of the characters within the socio-historical context of early 20th-century England. This literature review examines the existing scholarship on nostalgia, its pragmatic implications, and its role in character development, particularly focusing on the works of key theorists.

Davis (1979), defines nostalgia as a longing for the past that emerges during periods of significant change. He argues that nostalgia can serve both as a coping mechanism and a motivator for social action. This perspective is particularly relevant in *Arthur & George*, where Arthur Conan Doyle's longing for the Victorian ideals of justice and morality influences his quest to advocate for George Edalji, a victim of racial prejudice. The interplay between personal nostalgia and moral responsibility reflects Davis's assertion that nostalgia can inspire individuals to confront injustices rooted in their societal contexts.

Nora's seminal essay, *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire* (1989), further enriches this discussion by distinguishing between memory as a lived experience and history as a constructed narrative. Nora posits that collective memory can shape national identity, often overshadowing marginalized voices. This framework is crucial in understanding George Edalji's character, whose mixed-race identity renders him a subject of societal exclusion. His nostalgia for acceptance contrasts sharply with Doyle's idealized recollections of a glorious past, thereby illustrating the complexities of memory as both a personal and collective phenomenon.

Stewart (1993), on the other hand, delves into the emotional dimensions of nostalgia, describing it as a "sadness without an object." Stewart's insights provide a backdrop for examining how both Doyle and Edalji navigate their respective longings. Doyle's nostalgia is tinged with a sense of loss for a more honorable past, while Edalji's yearning reflects a struggle for recognition in a society that privileges certain identities. This duality emphasizes how nostalgia can serve as a motivator for both personal transformation and social critique.

In the context of postmodernism, Jameson (1991) highlights how nostalgia can be commodified in a society characterized by cultural fragmentation. This perspective invites a critical examination of how nostalgia functions in Barnes' narrative. The characters' recollections are not merely personal but are interwoven with broader historical narratives, revealing the societal dynamics at play. The commodification of

nostalgia becomes evident as Doyle grapples with his literary legacy, questioning the moral implications of his past works in light of contemporary challenges.

Finally, Mey (2001) emphasizes the significance of context in understanding language and meaning. This insight is pivotal in analyzing how Barnes utilizes nostalgia as a pragmatic tool to shape character motivations and societal critiques. The interplay of personal and collective memories in *Arthur & George* reinforces the idea that memory is not static; rather, it is constantly reshaped by societal narratives and individual experiences.

In closing, the scholarship surrounding nostalgia provides a rich theoretical framework for understanding its role in *Arthur & George*. Through the lens of various theorists, it becomes evident that nostalgia serves as a powerful motivator for both Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, shaping their identities and actions within a complex socio-historical context. Barnes' exploration of nostalgia ultimately underscores the importance of recognizing diverse narratives within historical discourse, revealing the intricate connections between memory, identity, and social justice.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative literary analysis to explore the pragmatics of nostalgia in Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*. The methodology is structured around close readings of the text, focusing on the characters of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. Firstly, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify key motifs related to nostalgia, memory, and identity. This involved highlighting passages that illustrate how characters' memories influence their motivations and actions. Secondary sources, including scholarly articles and critical essays, were reviewed to contextualize these themes within existing literature on nostalgia and its socio-historical implications. The analysis draws on theoretical frameworks from notable scholars, such as Fred Davis and Pierre Nora, to understand the interplay between individual and collective memory. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of how nostalgia functions as both a personal and societal phenomenon in the narrative. Additionally, the study examines the narrative structure of the text, analyzing how Barnes alternates between the perspectives of Doyle and Edalji to enhance the exploration of nostalgia. This comprehensive methodology facilitates a

deeper engagement with the text, revealing the complexities of nostalgia as a character motivator and its broader societal implications.

## 4 ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Nostalgia serves as a character motivator

In Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, nostalgia serves as a significant motivator for the characters, particularly Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. This emotional force shapes their identities, informs their actions, and ultimately drives the narrative forward. By examining how nostalgia influences these characters, we can discern its pragmatic implications within the story, revealing how the past intertwines with the present to inform both personal and societal narratives. To understand the pragmatic implications, we can turn to Allott's definition: pragmatics studies "speaker meaning and how people communicate" (2010, p.1). Allott's definition of pragmatics emphasizes the importance of context in communication, suggesting that the characters' nostalgic reflections influence their interactions and decisions. This interplay underscores how personal histories can reshape societal perceptions, illustrating the intricate connection between memory and meaning within the narrative. Thus, nostalgia becomes a powerful tool for understanding character motivations and their broader implications in society.

Arthur Conan Doyle, the celebrated author of the Sherlock Holmes series, embodies a complex relationship with nostalgia. Throughout the novel, he frequently reflects on his past achievements, particularly during the height of his literary career. This nostalgia for a more glorious time propels him into a quest for justice on behalf of Edalji, a man wrongfully accused of a crime rooted in racial prejudice. Doyle's idealization of his past success creates a sense of obligation to rectify the injustices of the present, demonstrating how nostalgia can fuel ethical and moral motivations. As Barnes notes, "He was often reminded, in his quieter moments, of how much he missed the clarity of that world—the world where justice was served, and heroes were unambiguously good" (2005, p.75). His longing for a time when he felt more in control and influential leads him to take on the role of advocate for Edalji, manifesting a desire to restore not only the man's reputation but also his own sense of purpose. Doyle's actions reflect what Boym

describes as the nostalgic's desire to "obliterate history and turn it into a private or collective mythology" (2001, p.33).

In contrast, George Edalji's nostalgia is marked by a yearning for acceptance and belonging. As a mixed-race individual in a society rife with prejudice, Edalji's reflections on his past highlight the struggles he faces in his quest for identity. His memories are tinged with a desire for a more inclusive society, one where he is recognized for his merits rather than judged by his racial background. "In his heart, George carried a deep yearning for a past where he felt accepted, a time he could barely remember but that haunted him with its elusive promise of belonging" (Barnes, 2005, p.112). This longing for validation drives his actions throughout the novel, revealing how nostalgia can serve as both a source of strength and a reminder of societal limitations. Edalji's experiences compel him to seek justice not only for himself but also for others who have been marginalized, demonstrating how personal nostalgia can evoke broader social consciousness. Edalji's yearning embodies Boym's definition of nostalgia as "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (2001, p.xiii).

The interplay between Arthur and George further illustrates nostalgia's role as a character motivator. Their interactions are steeped in contrasting memories and aspirations. While Doyle's nostalgia is rooted in the idealism of a bygone era, Edalji's nostalgia is a reaction against the harsh realities of his current existence. This dynamic creates a rich narrative tension, as each character's motivations are informed by their distinct relationships with the past. Doyle's quest for justice is not merely about Edalji; it is also a means for him to reclaim his own lost sense of agency and moral integrity. This interplay highlights Bakhtin's concept that "language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated—overpopulated—with the intentions of others" (1992, p.294). Bakhtin's insight into language emphasizes that their interactions are not solely personal; they are influenced by societal expectations and historical contexts. This layered communication adds depth to their motivations, illustrating how nostalgia intertwines with broader social narratives and highlights the struggle for agency amid conflicting desires and realities. Through their relationship, Barnes effectively showcases the multifaceted nature of memory in shaping human experience and communication.

Moreover, nostalgia also influences the reader's perception of the characters. Barnes invites readers to engage with their own memories, encouraging them to reflect

on how nostalgia shapes their understanding of identity and justice. This engagement highlights the universality of nostalgia, suggesting that it is not just a personal experience but a collective one that resonates across different contexts and time periods. As Chapman notes, understanding context is crucial in interpreting meaning (2011, p.166).

In short, nostalgia acts as a vital character motivator in *Arthur & George*, shaping the identities and actions of both Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji. For Doyle, nostalgia serves as a catalyst for moral action, pushing him to confront the injustices of his time. For Edalji, it underscores his struggle for identity and belonging in a prejudiced society. Together, their narratives illustrate the complexities of nostalgia, revealing its power to influence character motivations and highlight broader societal themes. Through this exploration, Barnes effectively demonstrates how the past continues to echo in the present, shaping human experiences and moral imperatives. Anspach's translation of Hofer's work reveals that nostalgia was once considered a medical condition (1934, p.51), highlighting its profound impact on individuals.

#### **4.2 The interplay of memory and identity**

In Julian Barnes' *Arthur & George*, the interplay of memory and identity is intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, shaping the characters' experiences and their understanding of themselves. Through the lens of nostalgia, Barnes explores how memories influence personal identities, revealing the complexities of human emotion and societal context. The novel's protagonists, Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, exemplify how memory serves as both a foundation for identity and a battleground for societal recognition. Davis (1979) provides a sociological perspective on nostalgia, noting that it arises during times of "discontinuous change" when the past feels particularly distant (p.98). Davis's observation about nostalgia during "discontinuous change" highlights how both Doyle and Edalji grapple with their pasts in response to shifting societal landscapes. This tension exposes the fragility of identity in the face of transformation, illustrating how nostalgia can evoke both comfort and conflict. As the characters navigate their memories, Barnes reveals how nostalgia is not merely a longing for the past, but a critical lens through which they seek understanding and validation in an evolving world.

Arthur Conan Doyle's identity is deeply tied to his memories of literary success and the idealistic values of the Victorian era. His nostalgia for a time when he was at the pinnacle of his career fuels his motivations and informs his actions throughout the story. Doyle's recollections of his past accomplishments not only shape his self-image but also create a moral imperative to advocate for justice on behalf of Edalji. This connection between memory and identity illustrates how Doyle's sense of self is rooted in his past experiences, which he views through a romanticized lens. As Barnes notes, "He found himself wondering how much of his character had been shaped by the stories he had told, and how much by the memories he had chosen to keep" (p. 92). His longing for the glory of his youth drives him to confront contemporary injustices, revealing how memories can inspire a re-evaluation of personal responsibility and ethical behavior. Willis H. McCann (1941) explores the psychological dimensions of nostalgia, highlighting its role in shaping individual behavior (p.76). McCann's insights suggest that nostalgia can propel individuals to confront present challenges, bridging past glories with contemporary responsibilities. This dynamic underscores the transformative power of memory in shaping ethical actions and personal agency.

Conversely, George Edalji's relationship with memory is marked by a struggle against societal prejudice and exclusion. As a mixed-race individual, Edalji's memories are tinged with a sense of alienation, reflecting the harsh realities of his experiences in a predominantly white society. His nostalgia is not for a lost ideal but for the acceptance and recognition that he has been denied. This longing informs his identity, compelling him to seek validation in a world that often marginalizes him. As Barnes articulates, "every glance, every whisper seemed to remind him that his identity was an inheritance of the past, a burden he could neither escape nor embrace fully" (p.145). Edalji's fragmented memories create a complex interplay between his self-perception and the external perceptions imposed by society, illustrating how identity can be shaped by both personal experiences and societal narratives. Hutcheon (2000) discusses the relationship between irony and nostalgia in postmodernism, suggesting that nostalgia can be "invoked but, at the same time, undercut, put into perspective, seen for exactly what it is—a comment on the present as much as on the past" (p.13).

The contrast between Doyle and Edalji highlights the multifaceted nature of memory and identity. While Doyle's memories serve to reinforce a sense of purpose, Edalji's memories reveal the challenges of navigating a world shaped by racial and social

dynamics. This dynamic creates a rich narrative tension, as both characters grapple with their identities in relation to their pasts. The interplay between their memories underscores the broader themes of justice and moral obligation, suggesting that identity is not a static construct but a fluid interplay of experiences shaped by both personal and collective histories. Jameson (1991) argues that postmodern society has "begun to lose its capacity to retain its own past, has begun to live in a perpetual present" (p.44), which influences how characters engage with their memories.

Barnes also employs a narrative structure that mirrors this interplay, alternating between Doyle's and Edalji's perspectives. This dual narrative allows readers to witness how memory informs each character's identity, creating a dialogue between their differing experiences. The juxtaposition of their memories not only enriches the narrative but also invites readers to consider how memory shapes their understanding of identity and justice. This engagement prompts a reflection on how societal constructs influence personal experiences, revealing the broader implications of nostalgia in understanding human relationships. Levinson (1983), provides a framework for understanding how language is used in context to create meaning (p. 69). Barnes' dual narrative structure emphasizes the subjective nature of memory, aligning with Levinson's perspective that context shapes meaning. This interplay highlights how differing memories inform identity and justice, prompting readers to reflect on the relational dynamics between personal experiences and societal constructs, ultimately enriching the understanding of human relationships.

Thus, the interplay of memory and identity in *Arthur & George* is a central theme that shapes the characters' experiences and motivations. Through the contrasting relationships of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji with their memories, Barnes illustrates how identity is a dynamic construct influenced by both personal recollections and societal contexts. This exploration highlights the complexities of nostalgia and its role in shaping human experiences, ultimately suggesting that our identities are continuously molded by the interplay of memory and the societal narratives we inhabit. Davis (1979) examines how nostalgia serves as both a psychological tool and a potential obstacle to growth, resonating with the characters' journeys in the novel (p.126).

### 4.3 Historical context and collective memory

In *Arthur & George*, Julian Barnes intricately weaves the personal narratives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji against the backdrop of early 20th-century England, a period marked by social upheaval, racial tension, and shifting cultural values. The historical context not only frames the characters' experiences but also serves as a catalyst for exploring collective memory—a shared recollection of the past that shapes societal identity. Through this interplay, Barnes highlights how individual memories intersect with broader historical narratives, influencing both personal and collective identities. Mey (2001) emphasizes the importance of context in understanding meaning, stating that "pragmatics studies the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society" (p.6).

The novel is set in a time when the British Empire was in decline, and societal norms were being challenged. The Edwardian era, characterized by strict class hierarchies and racial prejudices, provides a rich historical context that informs both Arthur and George's experiences. Doyle, a product of this era, embodies the complexities of Victorian ideals, grappling with notions of justice, morality, and success. His nostalgia for a more glorious past reflects not only his personal longing but also a collective yearning for a time when British imperialism was at its zenith. As Barnes notes, "In a time when the Empire was beginning to show cracks, the stories of men like George were often buried beneath the weight of collective pride" (p.34). This nostalgia complicates Doyle's identity as he wrestles with the moral implications of his societal status and the injustices faced by individuals like Edalji. Nora (1989) explores the distinction between memory and history, suggesting that "memory is life...permanently in evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation" (p.8).

George Edalji, on the other hand, represents the marginalized voices often silenced in historical narratives. As a mixed-race individual wrongfully accused of a crime, his experiences highlight the racial prejudices that permeated society at the time. Edalji's struggle for recognition and justice is emblematic of broader societal issues, revealing how collective memory often overlooks the narratives of those who are marginalized. His longing for acceptance and validation is rooted in a historical context that privileges certain identities over others, illustrating the complexities of memory as

both a personal and collective phenomenon. Stewart (1993) examines the nature of longing, stating that "nostalgia is a sadness without an object" (p.23).

Barnes uses Edalji's case to critique the societal norms of the period, inviting readers to consider how historical narratives are constructed and who gets to tell them. The novel raises questions about the reliability of memory in the face of systemic injustice, suggesting that collective memory can perpetuate biases and exclude marginalized voices. This theme resonates with contemporary discussions about representation and the importance of recognizing diverse perspectives within historical narratives. As Barnes reflects, "The past was not just a collection of individual memories but a tapestry of shared experiences that shaped the present and future of a nation grappling with its identity" (p.210). Salmose (2018) explores the representation of nostalgia in art, questioning the authenticity and purpose of nostalgic art.

The interplay between individual and collective memory is further emphasized through the characters' interactions and their respective quests for justice. Doyle's advocacy for Edalji can be seen as an attempt to reconcile his own nostalgia with the realities of a changing society. His journey reflects a desire to challenge the collective memory that marginalizes individuals based on race and class. This quest underscores the potential for personal narratives to influence broader societal change, highlighting the transformative power of memory in shaping both individual and collective identities. According to Halbwachs (1992) "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories" (p.264)

Finally, the historical context of early 20th-century England in *Arthur & George* serves as a critical backdrop for exploring collective memory and its implications for identity. Through the contrasting experiences of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, Barnes illustrates how individual memories intersect with societal narratives, revealing the complexities of nostalgia and its role in shaping our understanding of justice and belonging. This exploration emphasizes the importance of recognizing diverse voices in historical discourse, ultimately suggesting that memory—both personal and collective—plays a vital role in navigating the challenges of identity and social justice. As Barnes notes, "Memory is identity"(p.93)

#### 4.4 The reader's engagement with nostalgia

In *Arthur & George*, Julian Barnes intricately crafts a narrative that not only explores the lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji but also invites readers to engage deeply with the theme of nostalgia. This engagement transcends mere observation; it becomes a participatory process where readers reflect on their own memories, identities, and societal contexts. Barnes employs various narrative techniques to evoke nostalgia, prompting readers to consider how the past shapes their understanding of the present. The novel's dual narrative structure, alternating between the perspectives of Doyle and Edalji, serves as a powerful vehicle for reader engagement. By juxtaposing the recollections and experiences of both characters, Barnes creates a dynamic interplay between their contrasting memories. Doyle's nostalgia for a more glorious past and Edalji's longing for acceptance compel readers to navigate the emotional landscapes of both characters. This duality not only enriches the narrative but also allows readers to empathize with the struggles of each character, fostering a deeper emotional connection. As readers oscillate between these perspectives, they are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences of nostalgia, considering how personal memories influence their perceptions of justice, identity, and social dynamics. As Barnes writes, "as he read the words, he felt a familiar tug at the heart—a reminder that the past is always just beneath the surface, waiting to be acknowledged" (p.86).

Barnes's use of vivid imagery and sensory details further enhances this engagement. Descriptions of the social milieu, the cultural tensions of the time, and the characters' internal struggles evoke a sense of nostalgia that resonates with readers. For instance, Doyle's reflections on the Victorian era are imbued with romanticism, prompting readers to contemplate their own idealized memories of the past. This engagement is not limited to nostalgia for personal experiences; it extends to a collective yearning for a time when societal values seemed clearer and more defined. By invoking these sentiments, Barnes highlights the universal nature of nostalgia, suggesting that it is a shared human experience that transcends individual circumstances. As he eloquently puts it, "the stories we tell ourselves about who we are are often laced with the nostalgia of what we wish to remember, shaping not just our history but our very identities" (p.177).

Moreover, the theme of justice woven throughout the narrative further engages readers on an ethical level. As Doyle advocates for Edalji, readers are invited to consider

their own moral responsibilities in the face of injustice. This moral engagement is deeply rooted in nostalgia, as readers reflect on historical injustices and their implications for contemporary society. Barnes deftly positions nostalgia as a catalyst for ethical reflection, encouraging readers to confront uncomfortable truths about societal dynamics and their own roles within them. This engagement underscores the novel's relevance, prompting readers to question how past injustices continue to shape present realities. The emotional resonance of nostalgia in *Arthur & George* also invites readers to grapple with the complexities of memory. Barnes illustrates how nostalgia can be both a source of comfort and a reminder of loss. For readers, this duality can evoke feelings of longing for a past that is irrevocably altered. This engagement with memory complicates the narrative, prompting readers to recognize that nostalgia is not simply about fond recollections but also about the pain and challenges that accompany the passage of time. By confronting these complexities, readers are encouraged to embrace a more nuanced understanding of their own memories and identities.

Overall, the reader's engagement with nostalgia in *Arthur & George* is a multifaceted process that deepens the emotional and ethical dimensions of the narrative. Through a dual narrative structure, vivid imagery, and moral dilemmas, Barnes invites readers to reflect on their own memories and the broader implications of nostalgia within societal contexts. This engagement enriches the reading experience, allowing readers to navigate the intricate interplay between personal and collective memories, ultimately fostering a deeper understanding of identity, justice, and the human condition.

## 5 CONCLUSION

In *Arthur & George*, Julian Barnes masterfully explores the pragmatics of nostalgia, illustrating its intricate role in shaping both individual identities and broader societal narratives. The novel juxtaposes the lives of Arthur Conan Doyle and George Edalji, revealing how nostalgia serves as a powerful motivator for their actions and decisions. For Doyle, nostalgia is a longing for the romanticized ideals of the Victorian era, driving him to advocate for justice in a world that often overlooks marginalized voices. This quest reflects his desire to reclaim a sense of agency and moral integrity amid the complexities of a changing society.

Conversely, Edalji's experiences highlight the painful intersection of memory and identity, as his nostalgia is tinged with a yearning for acceptance and recognition in a prejudiced world. This dynamic between the two characters underscores the dual nature of nostalgia: it can evoke both comfort and discomfort, serving as a reminder of lost possibilities while also inspiring action against injustice. By situating these personal narratives within the historical context of early 20th-century England, Barnes emphasizes the collective dimension of memory and its implications for contemporary identity. Readers are invited to reflect on their own nostalgic inclinations, prompting a deeper engagement with the moral and ethical questions that arise from our connections to the past. Ultimately, Barnes' exploration of nostalgia enriches the narrative, revealing its significance as a lens through which to examine the complexities of human experience, societal dynamics, and the ongoing struggle for justice and belonging.

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### **Authors' Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

### **Data availability**

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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