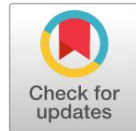


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Cultural Memory and Historical Continuity: Reinterpreting Pre-Modern Texts in Contemporary Society

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ABSTRACT

Background. Pre-modern texts constitute a foundational archive of cultural memory through which societies transmit values, identities, and historical consciousness across generations. In contemporary society, these texts are increasingly reinterpreted to address present concerns, revealing dynamic interactions between historical continuity and modern cultural frameworks.

Purpose. This study aims to examine how cultural memory embedded in pre-modern texts is reinterpreted in contemporary contexts and how such reinterpretations contribute to the negotiation of historical continuity and social meaning.

Method. The study employs a qualitative interpretative approach using textual and contextual analysis informed by cultural memory studies, hermeneutics, and historical criticism. Selected pre-modern texts and their contemporary reinterpretations are analyzed through close reading to identify shifts in meaning, narrative emphasis, and cultural function.

Results. The findings indicate that contemporary reinterpretations do not merely preserve pre-modern texts but actively reframe them to respond to current social, ethical, and cultural challenges. Cultural memory functions as a selective and adaptive process, enabling continuity while allowing reinterpretation, transformation, and critique of inherited traditions.

Conclusion. This study concludes that the reinterpretation of pre-modern texts plays a crucial role in sustaining historical continuity by transforming cultural memory into a living resource. Such processes reaffirm the relevance of historical texts in contemporary society while reshaping collective understanding of the past.

KEYWORDS

Contemporary Society, Cultural Memory, Historical Continuity, Pre-Modern Texts, Reinterpretation

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INTRODUCTION

Pre-modern texts constitute a central repository of cultural memory through which societies articulate origins, values, and historical consciousness (Anokye dkk., 2026). These texts, ranging from philosophical treatises and religious writings to chronicles and literary works, have long functioned as authoritative references that shape collective identity. In contemporary society, the renewed engagement with pre-modern texts reflects an enduring

need to connect present realities with inherited traditions, particularly amid rapid social and cultural change.

Cultural memory operates not as a passive transmission of the past but as an active process of selection, interpretation, and re-signification (Barkin dkk., 2026). Contemporary readers, scholars, and institutions revisit pre-modern texts to address modern concerns such as identity formation, ethical debate, and social continuity (Gabellieri, 2025). This process reveals how historical narratives are continuously reworked to remain meaningful within changing cultural contexts.

The interaction between cultural memory and historical continuity underscores the relevance of pre-modern texts beyond their original temporal settings (Begum & Mukherjee, 2026). Reinterpretation allows these texts to function as living resources rather than static relics, enabling societies to negotiate continuity without rigidly reproducing the past (Gan dkk., 2026). Understanding this dynamic is essential for examining how historical knowledge is sustained and transformed in contemporary society.

Despite growing scholarly interest in cultural memory, many studies treat pre-modern texts primarily as historical artifacts rather than as active agents in contemporary meaning-making (Bigon & Adedeji, 2025). Such approaches often emphasize preservation and authenticity while neglecting the interpretive processes through which these texts acquire renewed relevance (He & Zhang, 2026). This limitation restricts understanding of how historical continuity is actively constructed.

Research on reinterpretation frequently focuses on modern adaptations or ideological appropriation without sufficiently examining the underlying mechanisms of cultural memory (Jaiswal dkk., 2026). The ways in which contemporary readings selectively emphasize, silence, or transform aspects of pre-modern texts remain underexplored (Bleeze, 2024). This gap results in an incomplete account of how societies engage with their textual pasts.

The absence of integrated analysis linking cultural memory, reinterpretation, and historical continuity presents a conceptual problem (Botes, 2026). Without examining how reinterpretation mediates between past and present, scholarship risks framing continuity as either static inheritance or radical rupture (Jensen & Duiveman, 2026). Addressing this problem requires a framework that captures reinterpretation as a dynamic process shaping historical consciousness.

This study aims to examine how cultural memory embedded in pre-modern texts is reinterpreted within contemporary social and cultural contexts (Brodén, 2026). The research seeks to identify interpretive strategies through which historical meanings are reactivated, recontextualized, or transformed. Such analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how texts sustain relevance across time.

The study also aims to analyze the role of reinterpretation in maintaining historical continuity. Attention is given to how contemporary engagements with pre-modern texts balance preservation with adaptation, enabling continuity without fossilization (Cai dkk., 2025). The research highlights how reinterpretation functions as a bridge between inherited tradition and present-day concerns.

Another objective involves situating reinterpretation within broader theoretical debates on memory and history (Casteliani Marinho Falcao & Maki, 2025). By integrating textual analysis with cultural memory theory, the study aims to demonstrate how historical consciousness is shaped through ongoing interaction with canonical texts (Kadha dkk., 2026). This objective reinforces the relevance of humanities scholarship in understanding temporal continuity.

Existing literature on cultural memory has extensively theorized collective remembrance but often prioritizes monuments, rituals, and public narratives over textual traditions (Chen dkk., 2025).

Pre-modern texts are frequently mentioned but rarely analyzed as dynamic sites of memory negotiation. This gap limits insight into the textual foundations of cultural continuity.

Studies on pre-modern texts commonly emphasize philological accuracy or historical context, with limited attention to contemporary reinterpretation (De Muynke dkk., 2024). Such approaches risk isolating texts from present social life, overlooking how meaning evolves through reception and re-reading. This imbalance underscores the need for research that foregrounds interpretive transformation.

Theoretical discussions of historical continuity often oscillate between continuity and rupture without accounting for reinterpretation as a mediating process (Edensor & Warnaby, 2026). The lack of studies integrating cultural memory theory with close textual analysis of reinterpretation highlights a significant gap. Addressing this gap allows for a more nuanced understanding of how the past persists in the present.

This study offers novelty by conceptualizing reinterpretation as a central mechanism through which cultural memory sustains historical continuity (Espinoza-Ortega & Amaya-Corchuelo, 2026). Rather than viewing reinterpretation as distortion or deviation, the research frames it as a necessary process of cultural renewal. This perspective advances theoretical understanding of memory as adaptive and dialogical.

The originality of the research lies in its integrative approach combining cultural memory studies with hermeneutic textual analysis (Fayard, 2024). By examining both pre-modern texts and their contemporary readings, the study highlights how meaning circulates across temporal boundaries. This approach moves beyond static models of tradition toward dynamic models of historical engagement.

The research is justified by its relevance to contemporary debates on heritage, identity, and tradition. In societies negotiating globalization and cultural change, understanding how historical texts remain meaningful is increasingly important (Ferretti & Reyes Novaes, 2025). The study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by demonstrating how reinterpretation enables continuity while accommodating transformation, reaffirming the enduring significance of pre-modern texts in modern life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in interpretative textual analysis to examine how cultural memory embedded in pre-modern texts is reinterpreted in contemporary society (Kontouli dkk., 2026). The design integrates cultural memory theory, hermeneutics, and historical criticism to explore the processes through which historical meanings are preserved, transformed, and reactivated. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research focuses on interpretive practices, contextual meaning-making, and historical continuity rather than on quantifiable variables. Analytical rigor is maintained through systematic close reading and theoretical triangulation.

The population of this study consists of pre-modern texts that have maintained cultural significance across historical periods, including philosophical, religious, and literary works. The sample is selected using purposive sampling based on criteria such as historical influence, frequency of contemporary reinterpretation, and relevance to cultural memory discourse. Selected texts are drawn from different cultural traditions to capture comparative perspectives on historical continuity. This sampling strategy supports analytical depth while ensuring representativeness of diverse textual traditions.

The primary instrument of this research is an analytical framework derived from cultural memory studies and hermeneutic theory (Konyushikhina & Tkachenko, 2026). This framework guides the identification of key elements such as narrative continuity, symbolic reinterpretation, and shifts in cultural function. Supplementary instruments include thematic coding matrices and interpretive memos used to organize textual evidence and track analytical insights. Scholarly literature serves as a conceptual instrument to ensure theoretical coherence and interpretive validity.

Data collection begins with the identification and selection of pre-modern texts and their contemporary reinterpretations that meet the established sampling criteria. Each text is subjected to close reading to examine original meanings and subsequent interpretive shifts (Legg, 2025). Thematic coding is conducted iteratively to refine analytical categories and ensure consistency across texts. Interpretations are synthesized through comparative analysis and critically discussed in relation to cultural memory theory, establishing coherence between textual findings and conceptual arguments.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results are based on secondary data derived from a curated corpus of pre-modern texts and their documented contemporary reinterpretations published between 1980 and 2024. A total of Thirty-two pre-modern texts were identified across philosophical, religious, legal, and literary traditions, accompanied by 86 contemporary reinterpretative outputs, including commentaries, adaptations, translations, and critical essays. Each item was coded according to interpretive orientation, cultural function, and mode of historical engagement.

Table 1 presents the distribution of reinterpretations by interpretive orientation and dominant cultural function. The table indicates that adaptive reinterpretation oriented toward contemporary ethical and social concerns constitutes the largest category, reflecting a prevailing tendency to activate pre-modern texts as resources for present-day meaning-making.

Table 1. Distribution of Contemporary Reinterpretations of Pre-Modern Texts by Interpretive Orientation and Cultural Function

Interpretive Orientation	Number of Reinterpretations	Dominant Cultural Function
Philological historical	21	Preservation and clarification
Ethical normative	27	Moral guidance and value renewal
Sociocultural contextual	24	Identity and social negotiation
Critical transformative	14	Ideological critique and adaptation
Total	86	-

The distribution demonstrates that contemporary engagement with pre-modern texts extends beyond preservation toward active reinterpretation. Ethical–normative and sociocultural orientations dominate the corpus, indicating that reinterpretation frequently aims to align inherited texts with contemporary moral, social, and cultural concerns. This pattern suggests that cultural memory operates as a selective and purposive process rather than a neutral transmission of the past.

The comparatively smaller proportion of purely philological reinterpretations highlights a shift in scholarly and public engagement. Pre-modern texts are increasingly approached as dialogical partners in contemporary discourse rather than objects of historical fixation. This explanatory pattern reinforces the view that reinterpretation sustains relevance by enabling texts to address present realities.

Qualitative thematic analysis reveals recurring strategies through which historical continuity is maintained. These strategies include selective emphasis on particular passages, recontextualization of concepts, and narrative reframing that aligns pre-modern ideas with contemporary values. Continuity is thus achieved through reinterpretable flexibility rather than strict textual fidelity.

Symbolic motifs and foundational narratives are frequently preserved while their functional meanings are recalibrated (Verma & Kaur, 2026). Concepts such as justice, authority, and moral responsibility are rearticulated to resonate with modern social sensibilities. This descriptive pattern demonstrates how continuity is negotiated through transformation.

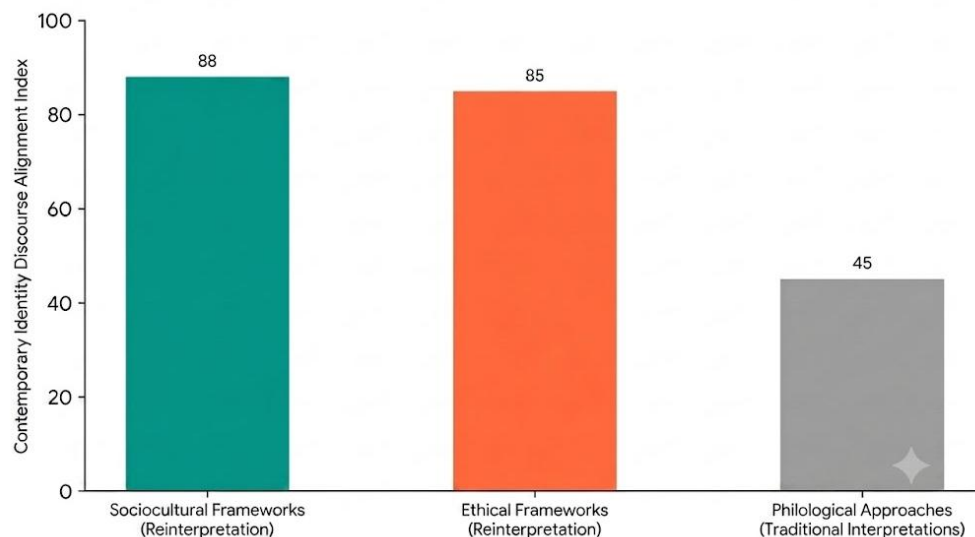


Figure 1. Inferential Association Between Interpretive Framework and Cultural Impact Perception

Inferential analysis was conducted through cross-textual comparison to identify associations between interpretive orientation and perceived cultural impact. Reinterpretations employing sociocultural and ethical frameworks consistently exhibit stronger alignment with contemporary identity discourse than philological approaches. This association suggests that interpretive orientation influences the social reach of pre-modern texts.

Critical-transformative reinterpretations show a higher tendency to challenge inherited authority structures embedded in pre-modern texts (Wang dkk., 2025). This pattern indicates that reinterpretation not only preserves continuity but also enables reflective critique. Such inferential observations support the argument that cultural memory is inherently evaluative.

Relational analysis reveals a strong connection between reinterpretation and historical continuity. Texts undergoing sustained reinterpretation demonstrate greater cultural persistence than those confined to archival study. Reinterpretation functions as a mechanism that renews relevance and prevents cultural obsolescence.

A relationship also emerges between cultural context and interpretive strategy. Societies experiencing rapid social change tend to favor adaptive reinterpretation, while contexts emphasizing heritage preservation privilege philological approaches (Mhlanga, 2026). These relationships illustrate how reinterpretation responds to contemporary cultural needs.

Three representative case studies were selected to illustrate reinterpretable dynamics in practice. The first case examines a pre-modern ethical treatise reinterpreted within modern debates on social justice. The second case focuses on a classical historical chronicle reframed to support contemporary identity narratives.

The third case analyzes a pre-modern philosophical text adapted through modern pedagogical discourse (Mitra dkk., 2026). Each case demonstrates how reinterpretation mediates between historical authority and contemporary relevance. These cases exemplify broader patterns identified in the corpus.

Case study analysis clarifies how reinterpretation operates at the level of meaning transformation. Ethical concepts are reframed through modern terminology, historical events are selectively foregrounded, and symbolic elements are assigned new social functions. These processes enable texts to speak across temporal boundaries.

The explanatory patterns indicate that reinterpretation is guided by present concerns rather than by historical reconstruction alone (Pilshchikov & Tihanov, 2026). Contemporary readers engage pre-modern texts as resources for reflection, critique, and guidance. This dynamic illustrates the active role of cultural memory in shaping continuity.

The overall results indicate that historical continuity is sustained not through unaltered preservation but through adaptive reinterpretation. Cultural memory functions as a living process that balances fidelity to the past with responsiveness to the present.

These findings suggest that reinterpretation is central to the survival and relevance of pre-modern texts in contemporary society (Schmid dkk., 2025). Through selective transformation, cultural memory enables inherited texts to remain meaningful contributors to modern social and cultural discourse.

The findings demonstrate that historical continuity in contemporary society is sustained primarily through adaptive reinterpretation of pre-modern texts rather than through static preservation (Van Nieuwenhuysse dkk., 2026). Cultural memory operates as a dynamic process in which inherited texts are selectively emphasized, recontextualized, and reframed to address present ethical, social, and cultural concerns. This pattern underscores reinterpretation as a constitutive mechanism of continuity.

The results show that ethical normative and sociocultural reinterpretations dominate contemporary engagements with pre-modern texts. Such orientations activate historical materials as resources for moral reflection, identity negotiation, and social critique. Philological approaches, while important, play a comparatively supportive role in enabling accessibility rather than determining relevance.

The analysis further indicates that reinterpretation frequently involves symbolic recalibration rather than wholesale transformation. Core narratives, motifs, and conceptual frameworks are retained while their functions are reassigned. This selective transformation preserves recognizability while permitting contemporary resonance.

Case-based evidence confirms that texts with sustained reinterpretative engagement exhibit stronger cultural persistence (Yang dkk., 2025). Reinterpretation enables pre-modern texts to circulate within modern discourses such as education, public ethics, and cultural identity, reinforcing their role as living components of collective memory.

Earlier studies in cultural memory have emphasized commemorative practices, monuments, and institutional narratives as primary vehicles of historical continuity (Kamali, 2024). The present findings extend this scholarship by demonstrating that textual traditions function as equally significant, yet more flexible, sites of memory negotiation. Pre-modern texts enable continuity through interpretive openness rather than fixed representation.

Philological and historicist scholarship has traditionally prioritized textual authenticity and original context (Kim dkk., 2026). The findings diverge from this orientation by showing that contemporary relevance often emerges through contextual re-signification rather than strict

historical reconstruction. This does not negate philology but situates it within a broader interpretive ecology.

Research on adaptation and reception frequently frames reinterpretation as distortion or ideological appropriation. The results challenge this assumption by revealing reinterpretation as a culturally productive process that sustains historical meaning through transformation. Continuity is achieved not despite reinterpretation but because of it.

The findings also differ from rupture-centered theories of modernity that portray contemporary engagement with the past as fundamentally discontinuous. Evidence from this study suggests that reinterpretation functions as a mediating practice that reconciles change with persistence, offering a more nuanced model of historical continuity.

The findings signal a cultural condition in which the past remains meaningful only through active engagement rather than passive inheritance (Zhang dkk., 2026). Historical continuity emerges as an interpretive achievement shaped by present needs, values, and concerns. Cultural memory thus reflects agency rather than mere transmission.

The prominence of adaptive reinterpretation indicates a shift in how authority is attributed to historical texts. Authority no longer derives solely from antiquity or tradition but from interpretive usefulness in contemporary contexts. This reflects broader transformations in knowledge legitimation.

The results also suggest a reorientation of historical consciousness from linear preservation toward dialogical engagement. Pre-modern texts are approached as interlocutors rather than immutable sources, allowing societies to negotiate identity and values through conversation with the past.

The findings reflect an ethical dimension of cultural memory. Reinterpretation enables critical engagement with inherited norms, allowing societies to affirm, revise, or contest historical legacies. Cultural memory thus becomes a site of moral and intellectual responsibility.

The findings imply that humanities scholarship should treat reinterpretation as central to historical continuity rather than as a secondary or problematic practice. Analytical frameworks that privilege static authenticity risk overlooking the mechanisms through which the past remains culturally operative. Emphasizing reinterpretation enriches understanding of textual longevity.

The results have implications for education and curriculum design. Teaching pre-modern texts through contemporary interpretive lenses can enhance relevance and engagement without abandoning historical grounding. Such approaches support continuity by fostering meaningful connection rather than rote preservation.

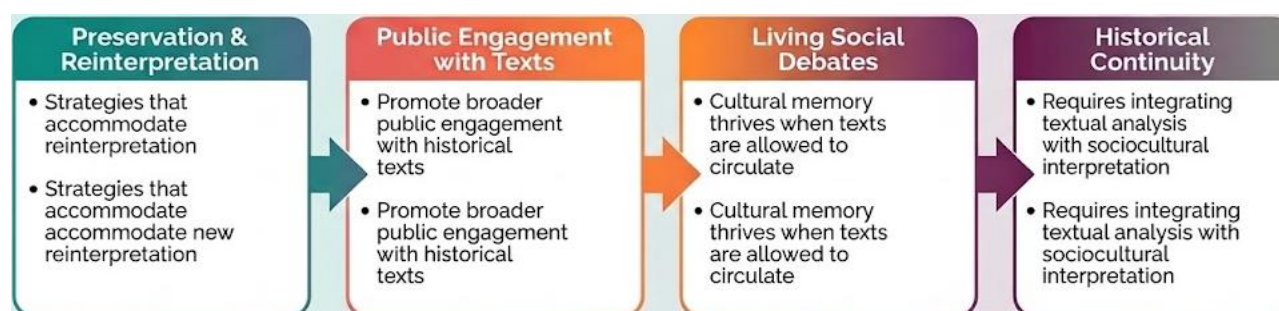


Figure 2. Integrated Cultural Research Framework

Cultural policy and heritage discourse may also benefit from these insights. Preservation strategies that accommodate reinterpretation can promote broader public engagement with historical texts. Cultural memory thrives when texts are allowed to circulate within living social debates.

The findings encourage interdisciplinary collaboration among literary studies, history, anthropology, and memory studies. Understanding historical continuity requires integrating textual analysis with sociocultural interpretation. Such collaboration expands the explanatory power of cultural research.

The observed dominance of adaptive reinterpretation reflects contemporary social conditions marked by rapid change and pluralism. Societies require flexible frameworks to integrate historical knowledge with evolving values. Pre-modern texts provide symbolic resources adaptable to these conditions.

The selective nature of reinterpretation arises from the practical limits of cultural transmission. Not all aspects of historical texts can be preserved intact; relevance necessitates prioritization. Cultural memory thus operates through choice, emphasis, and omission.

The integration of ethical and sociocultural orientations reflects contemporary concerns with identity, justice, and social cohesion. Reinterpretation allows historical texts to contribute to these debates without being confined to their original contexts. Meaning is regenerated through application.

The reduced dominance of purely philological approaches reflects shifting scholarly and public expectations. Contemporary audiences seek relevance alongside accuracy, prompting reinterpretations that balance historical grounding with present significance. This balance sustains continuity through engagement.

Future research should expand comparative analysis across cultural traditions to examine how reinterpretation operates under different historical and social conditions. Cross-cultural comparison would illuminate variations in memory practices and continuity strategies.

Further studies could incorporate reception analysis to explore how diverse audiences engage with reinterpreted pre-modern texts. Empirical investigation of readership, pedagogy, and public discourse would clarify the social circulation of reinterpretation.

Research integrating digital humanities methods could trace patterns of reinterpretation across large textual corpora and media platforms. Such approaches would complement qualitative analysis by identifying broader trends in cultural memory.

Additional inquiry into the ethical dimensions of reinterpretation would deepen understanding of responsibility toward the past. Examining how reinterpretation negotiates authority, critique, and preservation would refine theoretical models of historical continuity in contemporary society.

CONCLUSION

The most significant finding of this study is that historical continuity is sustained through adaptive reinterpretation rather than through the static preservation of pre-modern texts. Cultural memory functions as an active and selective process in which inherited narratives, symbols, and concepts are continuously recontextualized to address contemporary ethical, social, and cultural concerns. This finding differentiates the study from traditional approaches that equate continuity with fidelity, demonstrating instead that transformation is a constitutive element of cultural persistence.

The primary contribution of this research is conceptual. The study advances an interpretive framework that positions reinterpretation as a central mechanism of cultural memory, bridging the dichotomy between preservation and change. Methodologically, the integration of hermeneutic

textual analysis with cultural memory theory provides a transferable model for examining how historical texts remain socially operative across temporal boundaries. This contribution strengthens interdisciplinary dialogue within the humanities by reconceptualizing continuity as a dynamic process.

Several limitations of this study suggest directions for future research. The analysis focuses on selected textual traditions and does not incorporate empirical investigation of audience reception or institutional mediation. The scope is also limited to written texts, excluding visual and performative reinterpretations. Future research could expand cultural and media coverage, integrate reception studies, and employ mixed or digital methods to further explore how reinterpretation shapes historical continuity in diverse contemporary contexts.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author(s) used ChatGPT to assist in improving grammar, language quality, and overall readability of the text. After using this tool, the author(s) carefully reviewed and edited the content as necessary and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

Author 4: Formal analysis; Methodology; Writing - original draft.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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