

TITLE:

A History of Her

GENRE:

Literary historical fiction

SYNOPSIS:

A History of Her is a lyrical, mythic-realist, multi-voiced Scottish epic tracing the lives of forgotten women across five centuries - women whose names never reached history books, but whose lives shaped the land, the language, and the generations that followed.

The novel opens in **1520 Morvern**, where **Màiri**, an herb-wife working the tidal flats at dusk, senses suspicion tightening around her. As fear spreads, the minister burns her herbs - a symbolic beginning to centuries of silenced women. Màiri's wisdom and quiet strength form the novel's first ancestral thread.

In **1590, Fionnaghal the Fisherwife** faces the storm that steals her husband and child. Her grief binds itself to a small driftwood boat - an object that will return centuries later. Her chapter deepens the motif of the sea as witness, taker, and keeper of memory.

Sorcha, a Traveller bard in **1630**, brings humour, defiance, and storytelling fire. In the glow of campfire light, she tells tales that challenge ministers, amuse children, and preserve truths the written world ignores. Her bone whistle becomes another carried relic.

Isobel MacRae survives the repression after Culloden (1746), hiding her husband's last letter against her skin as British soldiers burn her croft. Her fierce silence becomes a counterpoint to the louder stories.

A nameless **crofter girl** in the late 1700s gifts the novel its anchoring rhyme:

*Heids o' com an' hearts o' clay,
Tak' me hame at end o' day...*

Her fragment is the earliest spark of the chorus, surviving only through the land and the mouths of women who never knew each other.

In the industrial revolution, **Elsbeth the mill girl** (1812) writes poetry in chalk beneath the factory beams - her creativity blooming despite labour, injury, and oppression. Chalk becomes a secret lineage of resistance.

Nora McVitie, a 1930s Edinburgh servant, hides her notebook beneath the floorboards, her brilliance unrecognised by employers who see only silence. Yet her midnight recitals keep the language of women alive.

In **1919**, **Agnes of Govan** rises in the Red Clydeside protests, wielding the same red scarf later held by Morag. Her cry - "We stand!" - embodies the political spine of working-class Scottish womanhood.

In **1944**, midwife **Catriona** delivers twins during a storm, her blue shawl wrapping newborns into a world at war. Her hands, steady across decades, bind the novel's theme of care as rebellion.

Then comes **1984: Morag**, the miner's wife, stands against police lines during the strike. With fire in her voice - "We're no ladies today. We're fighters." - she becomes the modern echo of Agnes.

Iona, a Gaelic teacher in **1993**, holds the language on the brink of extinction, teaching lullabies to classrooms half-empty. The wind carries her grandmother's songs, reminding the novel that culture survives through breath.

Finally, **Sarah Campbell** (2010) fights a different battle - single motherhood, poverty, and administrative cruelty. Her exhaustion brings the novel into the realities of modern womanhood.

THE PRESENT THREAD: EILIDH

In the present day, **Eilidh MacLean** inherits a cardboard box from her grandmother. Inside are fragments from the past:

- a blue shawl
- a red scarf
- a driftwood boat
- a bone whistle
- chalk dust
- a rhyme
- a letter
- a photograph

The objects feel impossibly connected.

As she travels to Morvern, visits archives, and listens to the wind, the chorus awakens. The voices of the women speak through her, polyphonic and urgent.

She begins writing their stories - weaving the fragments into a manuscript titled *A History of Her*.

In the final chapters, the voices merge. Past and present collapse. The women gather around her in an ancestral chorus, soft and fierce, triumphant and unbroken.

The novel closes on the reclaimed, unified voice of all twelve centuries-spanning women - a voice that rings with defiance, remembrance, and love:

“We were never lost - only unfound.”