

Psychological Realism in 19th Centaury Novel

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Abstract: Psychological realism is a literary movement that emerged in the 19th century, transforming the landscape of English literature. It focuses on exploring the intricate workings of the human mind, delving into the emotions, thoughts, and motivations of characters in a novel. This article delves into the concept of psychological realism, its historical roots, its impact on English literature, and offers an in-depth analysis of a notable work in this genre, alongside a comprehensive list of references.

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Introduction:

"Psychological realism" is an artistic method of feeling, experiencing and contemplating reality with the minds of characters. Experience and contemplation become a bridge between the mind and reality, reality becomes a spiritual reality full of subjective emotional experience of the characters, and the mind and reality maintain a close connection. Related to this, a series of unique expression methods of psychological realism have been formed. Although psychological realism is very similar to modernism in appearance, it is still realism in essence. Psychological realism novels inherit and develop the tradition of realism novels. They mind the objective reality and objectify the subjective mind. Through a detailed analysis of the character's psychology, it reflects the reality of the evolution of social spirit, and shows that it is different from modernist novels' artistic characteristics. Henry James is in a period of transition from realism to modernism. His works contain both the inheritance of realism and the development of modernism. As the founder of modern novel theory, the artistic characteristics of James' novels have always been concerned by critics. In addition to the most famous narrative perspectives, related researches have expanded to include language features, stylistic styles, interpretations of metaphorical meanings, dramatic writing methods, and artistic views in novels. The formation of modern Chinese literary schools is influenced by foreign literary thoughts. Chinese literature is closely related to the development of foreign literature. This article draws on foreign literary theoretical schools to carry out research and obtains an important basis for foreign literary development theoretical research.

Thematic Background

Psychological Realism

Psychological realism is a literary style that focuses on the development of the characters' psyche. A text's realism is enhanced by the author's emphasis to focus the attention on the individuals, instead of their occupations or the environment. The primary goal of and defining feature of this literary subgenre is creating believable human protagonists and antagonists with whom the audience can connect to a certain level, even subconsciously. A psychological novel goes way further than just reporting events by exploring the characters' motivations and contexts. Characterization and voice are given a greater importance that they would be in other types of fiction, and authors often explore more deeply into the characters' psyche. The significance of James's comments on fictional approaches as a bridge connecting the 19th and 20th centuries increases with this comprehension. Over the course of the 20th century, skepticism and psychological analysis became prevalent themes in short stories. Henry James's artwork reflects this outlook through a style known as psychological realism. Subtle intricacies of the mind are shown in place of the traditional narrative approaches that emphasize the progression of external events. This novel approach to a given reality is an effort to get significant insights into an uncertain existence, which proclaims usual interpretive methods to be inadequate (Ruthrof 369). Hence, it can be said that texts focusing on psychological realism are mostly "inner man" narratives. Psychological realism as an approach that is definitely not the characteristic of either short stories or longer categories of prose fiction. The major stylistic variation emerges from the author's decision to focus on either thematically extensive or confined content. Henry James' concentration is undeniably on the formation of intricate psychological frameworks, an endeavor that necessitates significant amount of details, or undergoes substantial compression.

In relation to James's approach to presentation, H. G. Ruthrof asserts that when considering fiction's connection to reality, James's employment of indirect characterization can be appropriately referred to as psychological realism. This is because, similar to real life, our understanding of an individual's personality is not acquired through explicit descriptions, but rather through the gradual accumulation of increasingly complex and subtle indications, as well as fragments of their psyche that may be difficult to discern (Ruthrof 371). The emphasis of late 19th century psychologists on examining the mind within its environment, and hence the individual's essential adjustment with the surroundings, revived the age-old subject of determinism. William James uses evolutionism as a rationale for his view that human conduct is unpredictable. He claims that the possibility of spontaneity is introduced by the concept of "chance variation," suggesting that the universe is not a tremendous clock whose movements are mechanical and predestined (James 306). James also discovers compelling evidence of ambiguity in the cognitive interaction between the mind and its surrounding environment. According to the author, there is a correlation between our focus and our own interests, as he states that these two concepts might be considered synonymous (James 1164). The manner in which our perceptions are shaped is dependent upon functional determinants, notably our individual requirements. The potential origin of our capacity to select our impressions lies in the biological aspect of attention, rather than serving as a mere validation of simple determinism. The scope of objects that can be the focus of both attention as well as perception is constrained. The coordination between our bodily components, environmental factors, and internal mechanisms all contribute to the emergence of a diverse array of perceptual experiences.

Aristotelian in its roots and sometimes ascribed with its systematization to Hartley and Hume, the associationist school predominated the study of mind in the 18th and 19th centuries. Psychologists who embrace the associationist view proposed that our minds are made up of isolated experiences. The mind was an empty space where all of these perceptual components may combine and interact to each other. Perceivers are the inactive recipients of fragmented emotions, and this associationist concept underlies the widely held critical consensus that Henry James's characters are "passive observers". While conceding the associative mechanism's descriptive value, functionalism nonetheless sought to shift our understanding of the mind in accordance with Darwin's insights. The field of psychology requires to start viewing the mind in this way, as an organ that, similar to any other organ, has evolved for the advantage of its possessor. Both the mind and the body, rather than being studied independently, should be seen from a functional perspective. James Ward and William James, two prominent functionalist psychologists, believed that psychology ought to focus on individuals rather than discrete units of feeling; on people in context rather than in isolation; and on people who are not passive but rather actively engaged in their own lives. The question of whether perception is better explained by an associationist or a functionalist structure boils down to whether distinct sensations impact an indifferent subject and connect into larger units of perception or whether a single, cohesive subject actively chooses its perceptions in its development of an intrigued, adaptive relationship with an otherwise indistinguishable environment. The explanation can be found in James's fiction; he explains that perception is functional. As an alternative to the associationists' "chain of distinct", fragmented concepts, William James suggests an equivalent of the stream. He takes issue with Alexander Bain's claim that "stream of thought" consists of separate concepts rather than one continuous current. William James, on the other hand, urges the "re-instatement of the vague" to its rightful place in human consciousness. Even the spots where we stop thinking, the nouns, he contends, are consistent with surrounding "water of consciousness", suggesting that most of the thoughts we have are nothing more than vague "feelings of tendency." All mental representations are colored by the free water that flows around them. The consciousness of its near and far connections, the fading echo of its origins, and the developing understanding of where it will lead are all faded along with it. William James argues that all thought is a stream, a continuous flow with interludes. Reality is a flowing perception, in other words, a stream. William James elaborates, saying that both Hume's "simple impression" and Locke's "simple idea" are unrealized abstractions. From the outset, our experiences provide us access to the world of tangible objects, which are only obliquely connected to the rest of the universe that surrounds them in space and time and can be split down into smaller, more intimate components. These components we disassemble and put back together again. According to William James, this sort of discrimination is both immediate and perceptive. He claims that even the distinctions we make between things based on our understanding of them may be traced back to differences in how we see them. Nonetheless, those who understand that the flow, continuity and "vagueness", to use William James's term, in Henry James's declaration are the same grounds of analysis and discernment, do not consider these complications to be perceptual. These characteristics are instead ascribed to an intellectual rationale focused on comprehending the elements of direct perception. James's perceivers are connected, not against but in their perception, but this unity is obscured by the fact that Jamesian cognition and Jamesian perceptions are not recognized as streams. William James argued that this source of personal agency had been largely disregarded by the associationist school of thought due to its emphasis on sensations and its relegation of subjects to

the position of passive recipient. Associationism is insufficient, but not unimportant in William James's eyes. Henry James's depictions of sight are consistent with the emphasis on unplanned motion. According to Susan, the idea of envisioning requires a subject who is both active and attentive enough to do the work of picking and arranging. Henry James's characters do not merely acquire a series of isolated visual impressions that gradually build into more complex units. Instead, Henry's perceivers distinguish what stimulates their interest and develops representations that meet their desires out of what William James calls an "undistinguishable, swarming continuum".

The Main Characteristics of Psychological Realism Novels

Psychological realism is the inheritance and development of the realism tradition. On the basis of strictly following the objective reality of the external world, it strengthens the character's psychological portrayal, and through detailed analysis of the character's psychology, it reflects the reality of the evolution of social spirit. It has the following characteristics[1]: first, although the psychological activities of the characters are used as the framework, and the mental changes and development of the protagonist are used as the main narrative clues and structural methods, the story plot is not completely abandoned; it focuses on revealing the mentality of the characters and at the same time expressing the emotion of the characters, he also pays attention to the story and supports the psychological process of the characters. In other words, pay attention to structural harmony, make the psychological structure and plot structure develop simultaneously, complement each other, and form the overall framework of the novel. Second, although focusing on the evolution of the protagonist's self-consciousness and striving to display the subject's magnificent and subtle subjective world as a hub to perceive the external world, it does not ignore the objective reality of the external world. On the contrary, it emphasizes the connection between novels and life, paying attention to the fate of real life, and the emotional flow of the characters' subjective feelings are coordinated with the development and changes of objective reality. Third, absorb some modernist techniques, such as the use of stream-of-consciousness techniques, even including subconscious depictions, but always emphasize the role of writer's consciousness in creation. Therefore, the writer's psychological analysis of the characters is also a dialectical movement focusing on rationality and emotion, rather than advocating irrationalism blindly.

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