



THE TECHNIQUES OF PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL IN 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE.

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Psychological novel, also called psychological realism or the Inner man is a fiction in which the characters' thoughts, motivations and feelings are of greater interest than the external action. It goes deeper into their minds than novels of other genres. Events may not be presented in a chronological order, but as they occur in the characters' minds, memories of fantasies. Before the rise of the psychological novel, writers draw their characters from the outside.

The term is first applied in the middle of the nineteenth century to a group of novelists including Eliot and Meredith. In the twentieth century, with the advance as a science, the term has come to be used in a stricter sense. Henry James and Arthur Miller are two of the most important contributors to psychological realism in American literature. Henry James explores the minds of his characters facing different complex social situations. He places his characters in circumstances which don't have always a happy ending.

Aspects of psychological novel

Psychological realism is interested in recording inwardness of experience. This means that there is a focus on interior landscapes, the inside of a character or characters mind.

No traditional story line.

Use of stream of consciousness technique.

Early psychological content in literary works are found in the texts of Plato and Aristotle. The tale of Genji, written in 11th century Japan, has often been considered the first psychological novel in the west. The psychological novel first is appeared in 17 century France, with *Madame dela Fayette's princesse de Cleves* (1678). The first rise of psychological novel as a genre is said to have started with the sentimental novel which Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is a prime example. By telling the story in the form of letters. The first psychological novel in America is *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) is written by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Psychological novel fully has developed in the 20th century, backed by Sigmund Freud's discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis. Freud is well known for his theories regarding the unconscious mind and the mechanism of repression; he states that the mind can be divided into two parts: the conscious mind which includes everything people are aware of and the unconscious which includes people's feelings, thoughts and memories that influence their behavior. Psychological novel writers recognize that there is another significant dimension of human beings, the unobservable subconscious that traditional



authors neglect to use when creating characters personalities. Techniques of psychological novel are: a interior monologue b- flashback c-stream of consciousness.

One of the most important techniques of the psychological novel is the interior monologue. This technique allows the author to present the character's thoughts directly, without the mediation of a narrator. Through interior monologue, readers gain access to the inner conflicts, doubts, fears, and moral struggles of the characters. Unlike traditional narration, which describes actions and dialogues, interior monologue reflects the spontaneous flow of mental activity.

In 20th century American literature, interior monologue became a powerful tool for exploring psychological depth. Writers used it to demonstrate how characters perceive reality subjectively rather than objectively. Henry James, for example, frequently employs interior monologue to portray the moral dilemmas of his characters. His protagonists often engage in intense self-reflection, questioning their motives and decisions. This technique emphasizes the complexity of human consciousness and reveals how inner thoughts shape external behavior.

Stream of Consciousness Technique

Another significant technique of the psychological novel is the stream of consciousness. This method attempts to imitate the natural flow of thoughts in the human mind. Unlike interior monologue, which can be structured and logical, stream of consciousness is often fragmented, nonlinear, and associative. Thoughts, memories, sensations, and emotions are presented as they occur, without clear transitions.

The stream of consciousness technique reflects the influence of modern psychology, particularly the theories of Sigmund Freud. Freud's ideas about the unconscious mind encouraged writers to explore hidden desires, suppressed memories, and irrational impulses. In American literature, this technique was used to portray the inner chaos and emotional instability of modern individuals living in a rapidly changing society.

Through stream of consciousness, authors reveal how past experiences constantly intrude upon the present. Memories appear suddenly, triggered by small details or emotions. This technique breaks the traditional linear narrative and emphasizes the psychological reality of the character rather than external events. It allows readers to understand not only what characters think, but how they think.

Flashback and Nonlinear Narrative

The flashback is another essential technique of the psychological novel. It enables writers to move freely between past and present, revealing formative experiences that influence a character's current state of mind. Flashbacks are particularly effective in psychological fiction because they show how memories shape identity and behavior.

In psychological novels, the past is not simply recalled; it actively interacts with the present. Characters often relive traumatic or emotionally significant moments, which helps explain their fears, guilt, or emotional detachment. This nonlinear narrative structure



reflects the workings of the human mind, where memories are not organized chronologically but emotionally.

Psychological Characterization

Psychological novels focus primarily on character development rather than plot. Characters are portrayed as psychologically complex individuals with inner contradictions. They are often torn between social expectations and personal desires, moral values and emotional impulses. This depth of characterization distinguishes psychological novels from traditional realist fiction.

In the works of Henry James, characters are frequently placed in morally ambiguous situations that require introspection and ethical judgment. James does not provide clear answers; instead, he allows readers to observe the psychological process through which characters make decisions. This technique encourages readers to participate actively in the interpretation of the text.

The Role of Psychology and Modern Thought

The development of the psychological novel in the 20th century is closely connected with advances in psychology and philosophy. Theories of the unconscious mind challenged traditional views of human rationality. Writers began to depict characters as beings driven not only by logic but also by unconscious forces.

Psychological novels explore themes such as identity, alienation, guilt, fear, and moral uncertainty. These themes reflect the anxieties of modern life, including social change, industrialization, and the breakdown of traditional values. American psychological novelists used literary techniques to examine the inner struggles of individuals in a complex and often hostile world.

Psychological novel has deep ability to penetrate and reflect internal world of a character in specific style. It plays very important role to manifest character's problems through unique psychological sides. Psychological novel author portrays characters through several psychological dimensions which reflect their attitudes and their thoughts. One of the psychological novel authors is Henry James. He sails in the human psyche in his novels. They are the portrait of a lady, the wings of the dove and the turn of the screw.

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