

The techniques of psychological novel in 20th century American literature. A descriptive study

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Abstract:

This paper aims to present history of American literature and its periods. It also presents the characteristics of 20th century American novel and tries to find out the techniques of psychological novel which include the following: stream of consciousness, flashback and interior monologue. These three features have great effects in characterization of modern writers. Early writers portray their characters from outside, they do not handle internal world of characters, and they are not concerned with the psychological dimensions. Modern writers in 20th century focus on these techniques to form new style of a novel and analysis of characters through them. They contribute to heed human psyche, internal communication and psychological dimensions analysis. The writers of psychological novel heed with the internal world of the characters and psychological spaces inside them. They use these techniques to portray their characters in specific frame different from other types of writing forms. These three features play very important role in the analysis of the characters in deep style. They enable modern writers to stroll deeply in the inner world of their characters and to find out their psychological dimensions.

Key words: stream of consciousness, flashback, interior monologue.

1. INTRODUCTION

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.

Statement of the Study:

Early authors of fiction present thoughts and feelings of a character through action or dialogue with other characters. Do psychological novel techniques analyze characters deeply and concern with psychological dimensions?

Significance of the Study:

This paper focuses to find out aspects of psychological novel and techniques of psychological novel which include stream of consciousness, flashback and interior monologue.

Objectives

This paper aims to find out the American literature periods, it tries to attain the following objectives: to determine the aspects of psychological novel; to identify psychological novel techniques.

2. METHOD

The researcher has used descriptive method to determine the techniques of psychological novel namely: stream of consciousness - flashback and interior monologue. This paper tries to manifest characteristics of these three features as literary techniques.

3. FINDINGS

- 1-Modern writers develop psychological novel techniques.
- 2- They reflect these techniques in their novels to present essential social issues.
- 3-psychological novel writers concentrate on the internal world of a character.

American literature is the literature written or produced in the area of the United States and its preceding colonies. During its early history, America is a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present- day United States. Its literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature, however, unique American characteristics and the breath of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition. The New England colonies were the center of early American literature.

American literature periods

Native Americans arrived (40,000 – 20,000 B.C)

It began in the pre-Columbian era with the settlement of the Americans by the palean Indians. Their literature was oral and used stories to teach moral lessons.

Puritanism (1600-1800)

Early literature written by Puritans in America often appeared as first person narratives in the form of journals and diaries. Puritans valued realistic writing with an emphasis on religious

themes.

Three important Puritan genres included:

- Sermons
- Historical narrative
- Poetry

Rationalism “the age of reason” (1750 – 1800)

The most important pieces of literature during this age were political documents, speeches and pamphlet. Its writing was less private and religiously based and the writing came away from the plain style and became full of flourish and colorful language. Period characteristics:

- 1-Human beings could arrive at truth by using deductive reasoning rather than relying on the authority of the past.
- 2-Mostly comprised of philosophers and scientific speeches.

Romanticism (1800-1860)

American romanticism was the obsession and celebration of individualism took on particular social relevance because America culture had always prized individualism and egalitarianism. Authors used of supernatural themes and settings.

American Renaissance -Transcendentalism (1840-1860)

Believed that knowledge could be arrived not just through the senses but through intuition and contemplation of the internal spirit. Its characteristics:

1. Everything in the world, including human Beings, is a reflection of the Divine Soul.
2. People could use their intuition to behold God’s spirit revealed in nature or in their own souls.
3. Self-reliance and individualism must outweigh external authority and blind Conformity to tradition.

American realism (1850-1900)

American realists believed that humanity's freedom of choice was limited by the power of outside forces. Period characteristics:

1. Feelings of disillusionment
2. Common subjects; slums of rapidly growing cities, factories replacing farmlands, poor factory workers, corrupt politicians
3. Represented the manner and environment of everyday life and ordinary people as realistically as possible (regionalism)
4. Sought to explain behavior (psychologically/socially)

American modernism (1900- 1950)

American modernism benefited from the diversity of immigrant cultures. Artists were inspired by African, Caribbean, Asian and European folk cultures and embedded these exotic styles in their works. Period characteristics:

1. Sense of disillusionment and loss of faith in the “American Dream”: the independence, self-reliant, individual will triumph.
2. Emphasis on bold experimentation in style and form over the traditional.
3. Interest in the inner workings of the human mind (ex. Stream of consciousness).

Post modernism (1950 -present)

Postmodern literature is literature characterized by reliance on narrative techniques such as fragmentation, paradox, and the unreliable narrator; and often is not defined as a style or a trend which emerged in the post–World War II era.

In the United States, the novel went through several changes until it reached literary maturity in the nineteenth century, along with the poem, the easy and the modern short story.(from Puritanism to postmodernism: Ruland; Bradbury, 1991, p.105)

Experimental in style and form soon joined the new freedom in subject matter; the theories of Freud influenced early American modernist literature. (Wikipedia)

Characteristics of 20th century American novel:

- 1- Chapters broken into fragment.
- 2- Concern with setting, theme and character associated with realism return.
- 3- No moral preaching.
- 4- Modern novels deals in no absolutes, moral, perceptual or cultured,
- 5- Traditional narration replaced with subjective narrative.

Psychological novel techniques are:

a- **Interior monologue**

It is a term that is most often confused with stream of consciousness, Edouard Dujardin the first to use it in his novel *les larriers sont coupes* (1887). He defines it as

“the speech of a character in a scene , having for its object to introduce us directly into the internal life of that character , without other intervention through explorations or commentaries , ... it differs from traditional monologue in that : in its matter , it is an expression of the most intimate thought that lies nearest the unconscious , in its form , it is produced in direct phrases reduced to the minimum of syntax , and thus it corresponds the minimum of syntax , and thus it correspond essentially to the conception we have today of poetry”

(Stream of consciousness in the modern novel, page24)

It is used for representing the psychic content and processes of character, partly or entirely unuttered interior monologue is also known as inner voice, internal speech, or verbal stream of consciousness is thinking in words, it also refers to the semi – constant internal monologue one has with one self at a consciousness or semi-conscious level.

Grammar rules are respected and punctuation is used to reproduce the sequence of thought, memories, feelings,

considerations of the characters. the main features of the interior monologue are it is a verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon, it is a verbal expression of a psychic phenomenon, it is immediate this distinguishes it from both the soliloquy and the dramatic monologue where conventional syntax is respected, it is free from introductory expressions like he thinks, he remembers, he says, there are two levels of narration: one external to the character's mind, the other internal, it lacks chronological order and the presence of subjective time, it disregards the rules of punctuation, it lacks formal logical order. (professor, Cristiana Ziraldo Liceo Scientifico "M.Grigoletti"¹, the interior monologue).

There are some authors who develop and exploit the term of interior monologue in the ancient world, they are Homer, Apollonius Rhodius, Vergil, a void, Longus, and Xenophon of Ephesus, they use it with great skill and power. Homer's use of the interior monologue is especially interesting; his practice is a combination of formulaic behavior and complete ease and flexibility.

Apollonius of Rhodius learns something from the Greek tragic dramatists, Vergil learns the technique from Apollonius, Ovid from both of them, in the ancient writers the interior monologue become a set piece a chance for display of verbal virtuosity, and it is natural. (The nature of narrative, page178)

There are two basic types of interior monologue, they are:

1. *Direct interior monologue* is represented with negligible author interference and with no auditor assumed, this type of monologue that Dujardin is concerned with his definition.

It presents consciousness directly to the reader with negligible author interference, there is either a complete or near complete disappearance of the author from the page with his guiding "he said or "he thought" and with his explanatory comments, there is no auditor assumed

means the character is not speaking to anyone within the fictional scene.

2. *Indirect interior monologue*

This type an omniscient author presents unspoken material as if it was directly from the consciousness of a character and, with commentary and description, guides the reader through it; it differs from direct monologue basically in that the writer intervenes between the character's psyche and the reader.

Indirect interior monologue is usually combined with and other techniques of stream of consciousness especially with description of consciousness.

According to Dujardin, one of the central goals interior monologue is to eliminate the apparent discrepancy between represented thought and the technique of representation.

There are another two types of interior monologue, they are:

1. *Short interior monologue*

One sentence thoughts that usually find in the middle of an action scene or a passage of dialogue, the reader hears a few words straight from the character's head, then it is with the action or the talking.

2. *Long interior monologue*

The reader has direct access to the view point character thought for much longer period, sometimes for several paragraph or pages because thoughts that go for a while lack any pace usually find them. (The complete guide to interior monologue/ Novel writing help)

Interior monologue aims to express thoughts and achieve the unmediated illusion by allowing a fictional character to express himself.

The most famous and certainly the most extended and skillful direct interior monologue is included the last forty – five pages of Joyce's' Ulysses , it represents the meanderings of the

consciousness of Molly Bloom while she is lying in bed she has been awakened by the late arrival home of her wandering husband.

A very unusual use of the direct interior monologue attempts to depict a dream consciousness. The only writers have tried it in the novel are Joyce and Conrad Aiken. Both of them base their depiction on psychoanalytical theories of dream mechanism.

The differences between direct and indirect interior monologue is the use of the first person pronoun in the one, and third or second person in the other.

James Moffet and Kenneth McElhey say an interior monologue is like overhearing someone's thoughts, they suggest three different scenarios which facilitate interior monologue they are:

- a. The narrator is reacting to his immediate surroundings the monologue tells the story of what is going on.
- b. The narrator presents their thoughts as memories the monologue review past events and connect them with present ones.
- c. The narrator's train of thought are neither a record of the present nor a recollection of the past – the monologue is purely a reflection, and in itself, the story. Interior monologue technique allows the narrative and reader to be simultaneously outside and inside a character.

The founder of indirect interior monologue is Flaubert who uses it extensively in *Madam Bovary* and it has become ubiquitous in 20th century and twenty – first century fiction. This term allows him to use his characters' language.

Henry James calls this kind of character as reflector for indirect interior monologue functions like a mirror that reflects characters thoughts.

Indirect inferior monologue is most often employed by third person narrators reflecting characters' thoughts; it can also be used by first person narrators reflecting the thoughts of another character. First person narrators also use indirect interior monologue to reflect their own prior thoughts. The first person narrator treats his previous self as it were a separate character. (Words over flown by stars, pages 52, 53)

Charlie Marlow uses indirect monologue to present thoughts, he has during his voyage up the Congo River, he reflects his previous self's interior monologue as a third person narrator to reflect a character.

Direct interior monologue, the characters' thoughts are presented directly without altering person or tense, the external narrator disappears the character takes over a narrator, direct monologue is most common in third person narration but it is sometimes used by first person narrator.

Interior monologue can be divided along the lines of active and narrative monologues; in active monologue a character is using his speech to achieve a clear goal. Narrative monologue simply involves a character telling a story and can be often identified by the fact that they are in the past tense.

Shakespeare's interior monologue in Macbeth, Macbeth's monologue, tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow

She should have died here after
There would have been a time for such word
Tomorrow, and tomorrow and tomorrow
Greeps in this petty space from day to day
(Macbeth act 5, scene 5, lines 17)

Dujardin draws distinction between intellectual discourses is pure dream in the interior monologue.

Interior monologue offers the unfolding of thought under undifferentiated forms. the synthetic, virtual, implicit thought of the interior monologue must be prolonged and spread out in the mind of the reader in order to become explicit, actual and clear in order to become a living and efficient reality, it makes

the reader think of the reverie by the apparent absence of cohesion and effort.

The interior monologue is the synthesis of questions – answer of impressions reaction which is uniformly juxtaposed in the mind. The effort of the reader comprises dissociating its development, classing the elements which come forth from an impression, separating them and situating them according to their respective places. in the interior monologue a reader finds the interior dialogue that seems to be the origin of all spiritual life , its prolonging in the intelligence becomes logical discourse and in the imagination pure reverie. (The Critical Heritage: James Joyce, volume 2, page 595)

B-Flashback

Is the interruption of the story's continuity to portray an episode or incident that occurred earlier. It is based on the idea of a vivid memory , it enables the writer to provide the reader with background information that appear not to be part of the story that being told but is considered essential by the writer for the understanding of the meaning of the story .

According to Merriam Webster says that flashback is an interruption of chronological sequence by interjection of events of earlier occurrence.” (Flashback-Merriam-Webster, encyclopedia Britannica Company)

By using flashback, writers allow the readers to gain insight into characters motivation and provide a background to a current conflict. Dream sequence and memories are methods used to present flashback. There are three common forms of flashback they are

1. The use of an event to bring back vivid memories of past event.
2. The use of old pictures which remind a character of the good old days.
3. The use of old letters that a character comes across , which refer to a specific event or events in the past , it is

used to convey to the reader information regarding the character's background and give them an idea of the characters motives for doing certain things later in the story therefore it deepens inner conflict in the story .

Flashback types

1- External retrospection:

Provides the reader with information about what has happened before the story has started.

2- Internal retrospection:

The reader, while facing new events recalls past events from within the space of time covered in the primary story.

3- Mixed retrospection:

This kind of flashback is a combination of both external and internal retrospection.

4- Flashback to complicate events:

It includes two sub-groups: firstly, flashback that inserts events and secondly those that change the chronological order of events.

5- Flashback of similar events:

A particular event is presented at the beginning of a text.

Flashback is an important technique for character development. When readers begin stories, they meet characters with pasts and personalities that require fleshing out. Extended narration or dialogue to achieve these ends can be boring and stilted, so instead flashback is often employed. The author uses previous events not only to explain current events in the story but also to deepen the reader's understanding of how a character might respond to a given situation. (education.seattlepi.com/techniques- flashback)

C-Stream of consciousness

It is a term coined by William James in principles of psychology (1890) to describe the flow of one's inner

experiences. He was the first to describe it as a continuous succession of experiences. It is properly a phrase for psychologists, but it became metaphorical. The word stream is figurative.

This term is reserved for indicating an approach to the presentation of psychological aspects of character in fiction, the stream of consciousness novel is identified by its subject matter rather than its techniques, its purpose, or its themes, the word consciousness should not be confused with words which denote more restricted mental activities such as intelligence or memory, one of scholars writes

“it has been said that no philosophical term is at once so popular and so devoid of standards meaning as consciousness, and the layman’s usage of the term has been credited with begging as many metaphysical questions as will probably be the privilege of any single word”(stream of consciousness in the modern novel, page 2)

Consciousness indicates the entire area of mental attention from precociousness on through the levels of mind up to and including the highest one of rational communicable awareness, stream of consciousness fiction is concerned with those levels that are more inchoate than rational verbalization – those level on the margin of attention.

An analysis of stream of consciousness fiction assumed that there are levels of consciousness from the lowest one just above oblivion to the highest one which is represented by verbal communication. Low and high indicate degrees of the rationally ordered, there are two levels of consciousness. They are the speech level and the pre-speech level which is the concern of most of the literature. The word psyche is used as sameness of meaning for consciousness. (Stream of consciousness in the modern novel, page 3)

Henry James has written novels which reveal psychological processes in which a single point of view is

maintained that the entire novel is presented through the intelligence of a character.

Stream of consciousness fiction is a type of fiction in which the basic emphasis is placed on exploration of the pre-speech levels of consciousness for the purpose, revealing the psychic being of the characters. James formulated psychological theory and he had discovered that memories, thoughts and feelings exist outside the primary consciousness. Stream of consciousness literature is psychological literature but is must be studied at the level on which psychology mixed with epistemology. The attempt to create human consciousness in fiction is a modern attempt to analyze human nature.

The realm of life with which stream of consciousness literature is concerned is mental and spiritual experience both the whatness and the howness of it. The whatness includes the categories of mental experiences, sensations, memories, imaginations, conceptions and intuitions. The howness includes the symbolizations, the feelings and the process of association. (Stream of consciousness in the modern novel, pages 6, 7)

Stream of consciousness writers discover their diverse evaluations on inner awareness.

Melvin Friedman says.

“The stream of consciousness novel should be regarded as the one which has as its essential concern the exploitation of a wide area consciousness generally the entire area, of one or more characters”(stream of consciousness: A study in literary method page 3). Kumar says the stream of consciousness is “a direct quotation of the mind merely of the language area but of the whole consciousness”. (Stream of consciousness: A study in literary method, page vii)

Both Humphrey and Friedman maintain that the stream of consciousness novel attempts to convey primarily the pre-speech or preconscious level, Friedman asserts that consciousness is actually the entire area of mental activity.

The stream of consciousness novel presents difficulties both for the reader and the writer. The problem of the writer is to represent consciousness realistically by maintaining its character of privacy the incoherence, discontinuity, and private implication and to communicate something to the reader through consciousness. Stream of consciousness writers find it necessary to violate chronological sequences perhaps in imitation of human consciousness itself. Critics of this term said that the stream of consciousness novel is

“A singular mixture of invented colloquialism and inflated poetic mandarin, delivered in a tone as near as possible to an alcoholic mumble.”(The modern novel, page 46)

Novelists who use this term concerned with presenting individual personality, in terms of artistic sensibility. They employ basic devices e.g. free association , standard rhetorical figures , and images and symbols , they record their imaginative experience in only the most approximate way, Friedman said that the sections of stream of consciousness novel are knit together mainly by such methods of continual cross references of symbol and image rather than by the process of action.

Friedman lists three wide methods which are available to the stream of consciousness writer namely interior monologue, internal analysis and sensory impression. ([www.bachelorandmaster.com-literary terms](http://www.bachelorandmaster.com-literary-terms)) Humphrey divides Friedman's internal monologue into direct interior monologue and indirect interior monologue.

The direct form is used for representing psychic content and process partly or entirely unuttered, the indirect method approximates Friedman's internal analysis in which the author summarizes the impressions of the character in his own words and is consequently closer to directed thinking and rational control.

Two other categories have used by Humphrey are omniscient description which gives description the consciousness or psychic life of character, and soliloquy which communicates emotions and ideas related to plot and action and which has greater coherence than interior monologue because an audience is assumed, he explains that the use of soliloquy is a combination of the interior stream with exterior action.

Only Humphrey of the writers has given any attention to the structural patterns employed in the stream of consciousness novel , he lists the most frequently used areas as (1) the unities , which usually have their framework in the external world (2) leitmotifs (3) previously established literary patterns which are often burlesqued (4) symbolic structures (5) formal scenic arrangements (6) natural cyclical schemes such as in Woolf's the waves (7) theoretical cyclical schemes such as musical structures and historical cycles.

Paul west in his book the modern novel said that the stream of consciousness mode is used by the novelists who depict.

“(the anti-hero who now typifies powerless, anti social man”, and that it has been renewed in significance by novelists who have lost faith in society and therefore also in the novel as social portraiture” (The modern novel, page xi)

Sinclair is the first writer to use the term in her novel “pilgrimage” to describe the fictional representation of the mind, it makes uses of the unconsciousness depths of the character's mind to portray them. This marks the way for the exits of the omniscient narrator...it is further developed by Virginia Woolf in her essay “modern fiction” she rejects the traditional style of writing novel as untrue representation of life.

The technique is a bold innovation that allows readers to experience emotional, moral and intellectual thought from inside a characters head and open up new possibilities for point

of view beyond traditional first on third person narration. Many of the first writers to use stream of consciousness are modernists such as William Faulkner, P.H Lawrence in their realistic writing they strive to portray characters, events and settings in plausible authentic ways.

Stream of consciousness writing allows an author to create the illusion that the reader is privy to sensations and uncensored thoughts within a characters mind before the character has ordered them into any rational form or shape. These thoughts are portrayed through direct interior monologue, the presentation of characters thoughts as if he or she is speaking allowed. The narrator disappears, if only for a moment and the characters thoughts and emotions take over.

Main characteristics of stream of consciousness technique are:

1. Recording multifarious thoughts and feeling.
2. Exploring external and internal forces that influence individuals' psychology.
3. Disregard of the narrative sequence.
4. Absence of the logical argument.
5. Disassociated leaps in syntax and punctuation.
6. Prose difficult to follow.

This technique has many advantages, they are:

1. It pulls readers deep into the narrative mind.
2. It can be used to lend a breathless, poetic rhythm to the story.
3. It can create an interesting verisimilitude by mimicking real-life thought pattern.

This technique writing can also occur within the formal frame of the commentary of a third person narrator , as the narrative seamlessly gives way, sometimes mid sentence to inner processes of a character's mind without actually switching to the first person .

A writer of stream of consciousness fiction has something to say, to express some sense of values and he wants

to communicates to the reader in a specific way, he chooses the internal world of psychic activity to dramatize these values, but psychic activity is a private thing and must be represented as private in order for the write to gain reader confidence.

Modern writers of 20th century change the form of traditional novel, they concern with the characters from inside not from outside as the early writers portray in their novels. Psychological novel techniques contribute to create very wide spaces in the imagination of the writers to portray the characters from their internal world and present their thoughts and feelings in deep style. For example one of these writers is Henry James; he is one of the psychological novel contributors. He reflects techniques of psychological novel in his three novels, the portrait of a lady, the wings of the dove and the turn of the screw. He uses these techniques to present his characters' attitudes in different style.

4-CONCLUSION

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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