

Research on Henry James and His Psychological Realism Novels

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Abstract: *Psychological realism novels inherit and develop the tradition of realism novels. Henry James is known as the founder of psychological realism. Study Henry James and his psychological realism novels, summarize James' creation and its rich cultural connotation, and provide necessary cultural resources for the construction of socialist literature and art with Chinese characteristics. James' unique novel theory and creative practice, inherit and carry forward traditional realism, and have a profound impact on modern stream of consciousness novels. The formation of James' personality and psychology is related to his family background, education experience and back injuries, which formed a unique view of marriage, which directly affected his future literary thoughts and artistic creations. Representative writers of psychological realism, in addition to Henry James, including Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver and Jerome David Salinger, have all made important contributions to the development of psychological realism novels.*

Keywords: *Henry James; Psychological realism; Formation of personality; Main contributions*

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. The Formation of Henry James' Personality

"Personality is a relatively stable and unique mental behavior pattern formed by interacting with the acquired environment on the basis of heredity". To explore the formation of Henry James' personality and psychology, we must touch on his family background, education experience and back injuries, as well as the unique marriage and literary ideals formed from this[2]. James was born in a wealthy family in New York. His father was an knowledgeable philosopher and theologian, and he cared very much about the growth of his children. When James was young, his father took him to live in various European countries. The sensitive James learned many languages and read many literary works. America does not have the kind of inducing power for artists' imaginations of European civilization, so it has a profound impact on James' future literary creation. When James was young, he experienced a personal disaster more terrible than the American Civil War, and he suffered from back injuries for the rest of his life. The accidental injury left him not only physical damage, but also mental loneliness, and even the regrets of his life's emotional life. Based on a strong desire for European civilization, under his personality and literary ideals, James finally decided to leave America and settle in England. In the face of the conflict between two cultures, James intentionally or unconsciously kept a distance from culture and life, forming a unique personality as a writer, and affecting his future thinking and artistic creation.

4. The Main Contribution of Henry James

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. Among the many psychological realist novelists, James' contribution is the most prominent, which is reflected in the following four aspects[3]:

(1) Adhering to the psychological realism creation concept, not simply pursuing the form of beauty, but reflecting the beauty of the form of literary creation in the process of describing complex and true life experiences. There are very few extraordinary events or earth-shattering actions in the story. It is the psychological reaction to the event that arouses people's interest.

(2) Created a unique theory of novels and is also an excellent critic. Emphasize the relationship between novels and life, and regard novels as "personal direct impression of life". The characters portrayed in the novel have few actions, and their thoughts, emotions and characters are all revealed through dialogue, psychological activities and detailed descriptions.

(3) In the process of shifting from traditional writing methods to reform and development, the psychological description methods of traditional realism novels have been inherited and carried forward, and unique psychological description skills have been created. Taking the "consciousness center" as the narrative technique, it breaks the "omniscience perspective" narrative method and autobiographical first-person narrative method of traditional novels.

(4) "Stream of Consciousness" belongs to a special kind of psychological novel. James uses different methods in portraying the image of characters, focusing on the conscious level rather than the subconscious mental activity. James' methods and techniques of psychological description of psychological realist characters have a profound impact on stream-of-consciousness novelists.

5. Representative Writers of Psychological Realism

Representative writers of psychological realism, besides Henry James, also include Joyce Carol Oates, Raymond Carver and Jerome David Salinger.

5.1. Joyce Carol Oates

Joyce Carol Oates is an American novelist, poet and playwright. He was born in a worker family in Lockport, upstate New York. He taught English and American literature at the University of Detroit; he taught literary creation, psychology and modern world literature at the University of Windsor; he taught at Princeton University and was elected "academician of the American Academy of Literature and Art." Oates inherited and carried forward the tradition of critical realism, using a variety of art forms to portray the inner world of characters, including the use of a large number of psychological descriptions and stream of consciousness techniques[4]. Although they all focus on the inner monologues of the characters, most of the character's psychology portrayed by psychological realism is logical and methodical. It pays more attention to the dialectical relationship between "psychology" and "reality". The description that reflects the intention of the character. While gathering the inner world of the characters, he pays more attention to the influence of changes in the outer world on the characters. Oates constantly explores writing skills and writing techniques, from attracting readers with violent plots to inducing readers to think with deep connotations. He is especially good at combining realism with the stream of consciousness, so that realism and modernism reach a state of fusion, and he is called the representative writer of "psychological realism".

The external world depicted by Oates is full of violence and absurdity, and the hearts of her characters are also full of repression and commotion. "Them" is a social novel with American social changes as its main content. Through the Wendell family, especially the experience of the heroine Lolita and several children, it reflects the tragic fate that the lower class people in America cannot avoid when they are born in troubled times. It contains a lot of violent plots, but different from naturalism and the best-selling novels that promote violence and pornography, "Them" describes violence and sexual behavior only as a factual explanation, not an atmosphere. Of course, there are social reasons for the sad ending of the characters, but the fundamental reason is that one's own consciousness is not awakened, and it is difficult to get a proper position and maintain a calm state of mind in a modern society where material desires flow[5]. Oates describes a large number of public or semi-public violence in American society, guides readers to think, reveals the source of violence, and provides a basis for readers to explore the moral and ethical values reflected in the characters' hearts.

5.2. Raymond Carver

Raymond Carver is a well-known contemporary short story writer and poet in America. He is known as the "father of minimalism" with concise and plain language and objective narrative. He has made great contributions to the revival of American short stories and is also a new reality in America. The central person of new realism. Most of his novels show the lives of small and middle-class people in American society in the twentieth century. They describe the poverty, unemployment, betrayal, and marital affairs that people encounter. Readers will feel confused and sad in his works. Carver once said that he was a member of the poor, so he sympathized with them very much. It is this kind of personal experience of the author that makes the work truly express life[6]. For a long time, the research on Raymond Carver in academia has mostly focused on his writing style, that is, "minimalism" research. The trivial theme of the novel, the conciseness of the text, the omission of modification descriptions, and even the blank space of the storyline make it "the leading person of new American novels."

"Blackbird Pie" is a representative work of Raymond Carver's neo-modernism. The theme expresses the pain, loss and panic of the protagonist after the death of their loved ones, the loss of love, and the collapse of their marriage, revealing the life and emotional plight of the American working class. The theme is expressed through intriguing titles and clever structures. The author inherited the realism traditions of Chekhov, Balzac, and Mark Twain in expression techniques, and boldly innovated on this basis, forming a unique post-realism or neo-realism creation[7]. The author adopts a "minimalist" way of expression, and seemingly meaningless details of life are woven into the text. Through plain text and straightforward sentence expressions, it objectively and truly reflects the lives of the middle and lower classes of society. The original form of life is reflected in the text, so that readers not only passively listen, but actively participate in thinking, exuding a concise and charming charm.

5.3. Jerome David Salinger

Salinger was born in a wealthy Jewish merchant family in New York, USA. When he was a teenager, he was sent to the Pennsylvania Military School to live in. After graduation, he went to Vienna with his father, and later returned to America to continue his studies. During his youth, he worked as a counterintelligence in the army, during which he married a European female doctor, divorced soon, and later returned to New York to specialize in novel writing. Salinger started writing novels when he was studying in the military school in his early years. No matter when he was in college or when he was in the military in Europe, he never stopped writing novels. "The Catcher in the Rye" is a representative work of his psychological realism and a sword that penetrates reality. It is loved by teenagers and has attracted widespread attention from critics. The work created a precedent for American literary psychological realism. In the face of the various crises that adolescence must experience, it successfully shaped the image of a dream chaser who pursues authenticity and defends innocent childhood, and deeply analyzes the rich spiritual world and the death of growth.

"The Catcher in the Rye" is a true portrayal of the psychological changes of American youth after World War II, and is known as a "modern classic" in American post-war literature. Traditional literary criticism mostly focuses on Holden's growth process in his struggle with the adult world, or his psychological model of constant pursuit and exploration. These analyses focus too much on Holden's mental state, and ignore the author's in-depth exploration of the protagonist's contradictions and complex psychological world, and fail to trace the origin of such inner contradictions and conflicts, as well as the social and cultural environment Holden is in. Salinger tries to reveal the complex spiritual world of the characters through Holden's psychological changes. At the same time, focus on exploring the home, school and social environment where Holden is located, showing the reality of the objective world[8]. The pain and struggle experienced by Holden's inner world are also the only way for the growth of adolescents' personality. The theme of "The Catcher in the Rye" is exactly its eternal brilliance and enduring charm.

6. Conclusions

As a famous American novelist, dramatist and critic, Henry James is deeply loved by readers. His artistic achievements and exploring spirit have established his literary status as the founder of psychological realism. Compared with the richness of research objects and research paths in European and American academic circles, the existing James studies in my country still appear weak, especially lacking in overall research and theoretical system research. By combing, summarizing and reflecting on the academic achievements that have been made, supplementing and revising the existing literary research paradigms, learning from the theories and methods of James' psychological realism novels, and improving the level of creation and appreciation of Chinese female literature.

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