

Psychological Realism

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"Realism is a corruption of reality."

-Wallace Stevens

Henry James claimed, 'the novel remains still, under the right persuasion, the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of literary forms.' The word realism is often invoked in the discussion of it. Realism surely be the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of critical terms.

Realism originated in the arts. It is an accurate, detailed depiction of nature or contemporary life. Realism rejects imaginative idealization. It is a close observation of outward appearances. Realism in its broad sense has comprised many currents in different civilizations. For example in visual arts, realism can be found in ancient Hellenistic Greek sculptures accurately portrays boxers and decrepit old women. The works of such 17th century painters as Caravaggio, the Dutch genre painters, the Spanish painters Jose de Ribera, Diego Velazquez, Francisco de Zurbaran and Le Nain brothers in France are realist. The works of the 18th century English novelists Daniel Defoe, Henry Fielding, Tobias Smollett may also be called realistic.

It was stimulated by the several intellectual developments in the first half of the 19th century. Among these were the anti-romantic movement in Germany. It emphasized on the common man as an artistic subject. Aguste Comte's in his positivist philosophy emphasized on scientific study of the society. There was the rise of professional journalism with its accurate and dispassionate recording of current events. There was also the development of photography with its capability of mechanically reproducing visual appearances with extreme accuracy. All these developments stimulated interest in accurately recording of contemporary life and society.

Gustave Courbet was the first artist to self-consciously proclaim and practice the realist aesthetic. After his huge canvas **The Studio** (1854-55) was rejected by the Exposition Universelle of 1855. Artist displayed it and other works under the label "**Realism, G. Courbet**" in a specially constructed pavilion. Courbet was strongly opposed to idealization in his art. It focuses on the commonplace and contemporary life in the art. He viewed the frank portrayal of scenes from everyday life as a truly democratic art. Such paintings as his **Burial at Organs** (1849) and **The Stone Barkers** (1849). In these paintings he had exhibited in the salon of 1850-51 had already shocked the public and critics by the frank and unadorned factuality with which they depicted humble peasants and labourers. The fact is that Courbet did not glorify his peasants but presented them boldly starkly created a violent reaction in the world of art.

A brief review on the relationship between literature and psychology: