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## Art and life embracement in a symbolic realism

**Tahereh Koochakian<sup>1</sup>** - *PhD Student, PNU faculty member, Central Tehran Branch, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran*

**Mostafa Gorji** - *Associate Professor, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran.*

**Behnaz Alipoor Gaskari** - *Assistant Professor, Payame Noor University (PNU), Iran.*

### Abstract

Realism not only has introduced way of thinking but also has discussed a different way of expression in mid-nineteenth century in west and despite its existence has experienced new forms during its stages of development and metamorphosis. Symbolic realism has been discussed as a realistic technique in art and literature style within this; through this method, realism and symbolism make contradictory link where although symbolic relationships are formed but signifier, arbitrary signified as well as secondary all have realistic approach in this link which mean in context realistic channel as well as receiver's experimental mind connection with that, although culture, society, policy, history, myths and legends are also represented but they aren't determinant of meaning and only can be crystallized in second half discovery of signifier as receiver's mental reserves and of course this is the result and related to discussed realistic patterns in work. This research is sought to investigate symbolic realism which is a kind of realism that is used as technique in a work and can be one of its style indicators and considered as main style in case of its extent of function in work. Besides structural investigation of "symbolic realism", history, approach as well as introducing its artists and writers are investigated in this research and has explained rout map for further researches in this field not only in literature field but also in architecture, painting as well as religious issues.

**Keywords:** *literature, art, realism, symbolic realism*

1. Corresponding Author, Tel: 09183571908 , Email Address: [t\\_kuchakian@pnu.ac.ir](mailto:t_kuchakian@pnu.ac.ir)

## Introduction

Realism was created as a modern attitude of reality in mid-nineteen century in west especially France; at this time, considering technology cycle and economy industrial circulation, realism first believed human being as this cycle circulator and eventually its main role in wheel of social developments, therefore human being face huge power of society and imagined a materialistic and evaluable identification for it. Augusta Conte (1798-1857) believed that human can investigate and analyze society as knowledge and Hippolyte Taine (1828-1893) also assessed society as one of important indicators affecting art patterns and by inventing camera, Fox Talbot (1800-1877) has stepped hugely for changing this attitude, meanwhile life usual aspects and people who were familiar with came into art field. Looking at reality formed evolution core of the realism, realities were discussed in its objective and subjective sphere. Classical realists wanted to demonstrate objective realities; but gradually and with sheer realism sharp edge slowing although objectivism still existed, mental realities and tendency toward influencing mental and emotional sub-layers of person were also paid attention. Considering these two approaches, realism can be differentiated in different kinds of primary, social, socialistic, magical, modern, and postmodern and post postmodern, they are also discussed among interstitial works as well which is not limited to defined framework. This research is sought to revise symbolic realism as a type of realism which has been often used as a literary technique and artistic and expressional style and especially art.

Symbolic realism was first discussed in new way in mid-nineteen century, but this type's epistemology might be considered related to late decades of late-twentieth century. It can be

claimed in internal scientific texts; only Mirsadeqi in "fiction literature dictionary" has investigated some subjects titled story in symbolic realism. Mirsadeqi has considered these kinds of work in territory of symbolic stories, in these kinds of stories [symbolic realistic novel] characters, tasks and intricacies are real and natural and details and descriptions are proposed because of that to give pure meanings from usual and routine realities. Symbols are emerged among these details and tasks of characters whether writer put them in story intentionally or unintentionally. In these stories, symbols are natural parts of realities; these kinds of stories often deceive reader with its appearance. If reader doesn't pay attention, he will just get its literal meaning and will lose other meaning or meanings of story. Characters' names can be also symbolic; moreover characters, tasks and things can also be symbolic (Mirsadeqi, 1998: 107). Chris Brooks in 1985 discussed symbolic realism in painting, architecture and literature in Victorianism peak in 1850s and 1860s by writing a book whose title was "signs for time: symbolic realism in mid-Victorian word" (mar, 1985, pp463-465) through functional investigation. In his set of articles about this, Robert Bellah<sup>1</sup> discussed symbolic realism in religion sociology by following and completing the theory of Durkheim<sup>2</sup>, this study is a beginning for analyzing symbolic realism and its history and samples in art, literature in Iran; however we hope to achieve a comprehensive and complete introduction in this case with expanded studies and investigate hidden sources in this field and observe more comprehensive researches in fields of architecture, painting, literature as well as religion. As following the history of discussion about symbolic realism in three parts of symbolic realism in mid-Victorian, Pre-Raphaelitism and symbolic realism

1. Robert Neelly Bellah (1927-2013), socialist in California University, he is famous for religion sociology

2. David Emile Durkheim (1858-1917)

3. An era in England which was started from 1830 and in other's word from 1832 or 1837 and continued till 1901

in modern religious theories will be investigated to achieve a comprehensive structure about that.

### **Symbolic realism in Victorian era<sup>3</sup>**

Victorian era refers to second half of nineteenth century in England, an era in England's history where has experienced rapid developments in the field of economy, class and social theories. Victorians have particular attitude, they want to have romantic feelings; but their emotions should be moved with world's rational attitudes. Tendency to reality expression exists except reality which is affected by creative mind's internal symbolism (Jackman, 2014: 107). Methods of realism in literature, architecture, religious and painting are used in this time where simultaneously either realistic or use the technique of symbolism for deepening its internal and external reality, the place where one thing has simultaneously maintain symbolic meaning and referential meaning. These are tangible and sensory Victorian styles from looking at world that Brooks identified it with investigating novels of Dickens (1850) with a clear perception of things, creative ambiguity of their symbols; for example in fog, sea, jail and so on (Hunter, 1988: 421). Victorians pay attention simultaneously to two faces of coin means literal and symbolic meaning depending on that; in fact Victorian's life may be considered as an attempt for discovering old symbolism which is assumed imaginary and gives reality a particular meanings following the definition of routine's life experiences in creative arts (the same: 108).

Symbolic realism agreement (a philosophical expression from materialism and idealism that now was interpreted as equivalence and artistic balance) attributed chaotic world of material reality meaningful and converted the transferred meaning by simple to material. In another word realism gave credit to symbol and symbols gave meaning to reality (Bright, 1985: 493). In fact it should be said that "Victorians expanded these philosophical tendencies (materialism and idealism) and artistic techniques

to them to be able to handle their materialist changes frequently. Through realism, they can show the world with the accuracy of scientific experiments and through symbolism, they can give meaning to chaotic world of phenomenological" (the same: 463). In their mentioned book, Brooks investigated fog in story "Derelict house" by Dickens as well as Lippo Lippi, a monk, and through this mentioned two subjects of realism and symbolism beside each other. He used the sample of fog in Derelict house, for explaining this point that symbolic realism is technique which pictures the world realistic mediating an artist simultaneously and interprets the meaning of from world symbolically. In book "hidden house", Dickens considered fog either in form of literal or allegorical, "Fog" literally shows the novel and simultaneously is spiritual blindness symbol of people who have closed their eyes toward this world, this is not something separated but it is coherent and here fog shows an allegorical and global sign. In all over literal and artistic works, Dickens has been able to show that how the existence and meaning get coherent (Bright, 1985:493).

About people who have considered this method, Thomas Carlyle as well as Pugin, Architecture can be mentioned. Carlyle paid attention to modern realism so far that Brooks believes that: "historical typology reading of Carlyle is specific to symbolic realism (Hunter, 1988: 421). About Germany supernatural philosophy in his book (Sartor Resartus (1831) he believes that there are some things in the field of human researches that might be seen by physical eye and there are other things also that cannot be seen by any eyes; but what can't be seen, it will imagined and pictured by mind, it has been perceived from his attitude that all external and outward things are signs and symbols for referring and showing to the existence of supernaturalism (Flint, 2000: 20). Pugin also was one of the architectures who investigated functional interpretation in architecture and considered reality as a performance. He

has been considered as the first defenders of “symbolic realism) in architecture and the first interferer and explainer of this method. Pugin noticed to the way of architectural expression, a principle which symbolic realism is based on that (Bright: 1985, 465).

### Symbolic realism and pre-Raphaelitism

One of the most obvious signs of symbolic realism was formed in works of pre-Raphaelitism and affected writers and poets by this group. Pre-Raphaelitism is the name of a group of British painters, poets and critics who announced pre-Raphaelite brotherhood in 1848 in London. They were inspired by Raphael prior art that is an Italian art of fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Spoor, 2004: 413).

Pre-Raphaelitism movement was performed in two levels: one in form of naturalism and symbolic realism from almost 1849 that artists seek to create an artistic work appropriate with their time and the other one, that method of medieval style which is somehow emotional and romantic in 1850s; one of the most important used strategies by these artists, is symbolic realism technique where artists took advantage of realism and symbolism elements in order to accurate proposal of reality beyond appearance. Some of writers in this time such as Holman Hunt and John Ruskin tried to propose religious aspects of their works by symbolic realism technique. Ruskin's insisting in showing physical world is provoked from senses which are different from romantic homogenous and others create halves of what we can see and next discoveries from necessary features in nature and they are intrinsic natures which are originated from accurate observations. Analyzing the pictures of pre-Raphaelitism movement investigate the aesthetics of this sense which during that

things either exist automatically or are a part of semantics (Hunter: 1988: 421).

For better perception of this discussion, one of articles about symbolic realism in works of pre-Raphaelitism titled “Jenny's Cage Bird”: symbolic realism in D.G Rossetti's Jenny will be investigated. The author of article analyzes aesthetics symbolic realism technique “Jenny's cage-bird” in poem of Jenny by D.G Rossetti in this article “London sparrows from far and near”// suddenly all start a buzz// the bird in Jenny's cage woke up// here they should have a role in their songs// because here also sun rises. First there are three symbolic attitudes of this poem of J B. Gordon are considerable, only with aesthetics aligns, Jenny's freedom for her internal limitations from prostitutes' room can be perceived. The sign of this freedom is bird cage whose sound is compatible with sparrows outside the home<sup>1</sup>. D.M.R believes that bird seems to be a symbol of woman which is limited in terms of gender and its song is as one of the symptoms which made the pattern of reborn associated with sunrise and light and the life which is beginning<sup>2</sup>. And Robert N. Keans considers it as another symbol of separation and limitations of beloved who is a sign of reality that narrator still considers Jenny as an individual expelled from the community<sup>3</sup>. As following, article's writer mentions a noticeable point which paves the way toward aesthetics analysis of symbolic realism technique in this poem; investigating the observations of American journalists such as Daniel Joseph Kirwan shows symbolic realism details in this case<sup>4</sup>. Kirwan believes that the thing which has been reflected in mentioned poem is a place in London in 1869 where is for keeping songbirds in Haymarket prostitutes neighborhood. He believes, instead of using songbirds in cage for primary symbolic pur-

1. *A Portrait of “Jenny”: Rossetti's Aesthetics of communion*, *Hartford Studies in literature*, i (1969),102

2. *Ab, Poor Jenny's case*: Rossetti and the Fallen woman /flower,UTQ,I (1980),191

3. Rossetti's “Jenny”: Moral Ambiguity and the “Inner Standing point” PLL,ix (1973),278

4. He published his observation from London and living there as “castle and cottage” in August 1870.

poses, Rossetti shows the actions of prostitutes in an infamy neighborhood of London. He says I understood in infamy neighborhood of Haymarket that almost each woman who lives separately has a canary or black bird in her room which loves it a lot; poor, alone, needy and separated women are beyond little polite Victorian society because of their shameful jobs; therefor the opportunity of legal marriage and being mother will be lost and their tendency to keep birds shows lack and deprivation of motherhood because they have to have something to love it. These birds were often some gifts that sailors used to buy for their female relatives. Therefor prostitutes of Haymarket neighborhood not only considered these birds as a companion but also some gifts from drunken sailors. Kirwan's observations clarify some parts of social history that was reflected in Jenny's poem. Bird's song among room decoration, gives realistic attitude to decoration because the readers of Victorian era have been familiar with these customs and considered bird as a gift from male workers of Jenny. Considering this realism of Kirwan and showing prostitutes' motivation for keeping birds, emotional answer of Victorian readers to Jenny's situation can be perceived and this feature provokes a kind of sympathy. Article's writer in explaining symbolic realism in context want that birds in cages shouldn't only be considered as a symbol of Jenny's wane, but they are some parts of contextual constant investigations that were discussed by Russeti during 13 years to promote poem's realism; they shouldn't also be read separately but also should be read according to Haymarket neighborhood area, Hyde Park, Serpentine lake, fog lights Chelsea, London Bridge and all the things which were existed. Russeti added realistic details to propose more accuracy to realization of what which is origin of Jenny's sins in terms of philosophical, abstract and divine signs which are identified in physical,

social and sex fields of Haymarket; finally not only Russeti showed the credit of his work as an artistic demonstration but also considered it as a realistic and every moment detail representative that is more valuable in terms of realism aspects and publically is considered as a contradictory and natural subject of prostitutes' neighborhood (Rivers, 2005)<sup>1</sup>. In analyzing this discussion we can see context that considering the approach of symbolic realism while expressing a reality in surface, symbolize another reality that considering reader's emotional recognition of that, motivates sympathy in achieving reality and realism will be unveiled for giving meaning to a real sense which is run in that described environment. Finally it can be said that "related part to pre-Raphaelitism showed that how reality and symbol can form a kind of construct, an incompatible connection in a way that have something to say (Jackman, 2014:107).

### Symbolic realism and religion

One of symbolism effects with the way of symbolic realism can be investigated in religion and artistic works. In Medieval, symbolic and pictorial interpretation of holly book was paid attention with emphasis on religion and this symbolism was used in structural and architectural system of Christianity and church, in fact church symbolism considered another description of reality, although medieval architects rarely thought about achieving reality and symbol but their main goal was loving God (Jackman, 1985: 108). Two contradictor sides of spiritual and materialistic are discussed in symbolic realism which shows mortal and infinite duality. Christian symbolism has Gothic neutral features which are related to symbolic realism (Hunter, 1988; 421). Robert Bellah<sup>2</sup> should be named as one of the scholars who discussed symbolic realism in twentieth century in the field of religion sociology that followed expanding the thoughts of Emile Durkheim<sup>3</sup>. Robert Bellah explained his hypothesis

1. Rivers, Bryan (2005), published by oxford university press. All rights reserved. For permissions

2. This section is developed by the articles of Dr. Bellah about symbolic realism and also answers which have been given to this theory.

3. Most of Durkheim's works tend to positivist school, he believed that social events have their own reality and according to him social realities can be investigated same as an object.

in article "Christianity and symbolic realism" about symbolic realism related to Christianity. About symbolic realism in this article, Robert Bellah says here reality is hidden in subject not object and especially is placed in relation between subject and object. Empirical sciences associations are functional in symbols which are trying to define objects; characteristic but non-object symbols define emotions, values and subjects' hopes or the other things that organize stream of contrast between subject and object or whatever tries to summarize whole subject-object with each aspect related to this area with whole. These symbols define reality a lot and aren't limited to empirical tasks, this position is symbolic realism. Herbert Fyngert in his work titled "change in self" and Norman Oberon in "love's body" can be mentioned as two secular scholars who helped Bellah's symbolic realism in recent years. Both of them understood that reality is either internal or external and discussed this reality that symbol isn't décor but the only way of achieving reality (Bellah, 1970: 89-96). Of course Bellah's symbolic realism has been given some answers as well. Trisha Wang of the University of California believes that Bella's symbolic realism shows that symbols and tasks will be common in symbolic realism and frequently change to each other. Religion is considered as a system of symbols<sup>1</sup>; although hypochondriacally trust theory of symbolic realism emphasized this point that symbols can affect actions and change them, this case was noticeable that all symbols don't pass one rout, when a symbol gets to myth's position will be more realistic by passing the time<sup>2</sup>. Bellah considered Durkheim attempt to achieve symbols' beyond as achieving reality, a reality which is soaked with contrasts<sup>3</sup>(Wang: 1-12). In religious symbolic realism, scholars seek the existence of universal religion which is provoked by strong and rich symbol of social and common actions of

humans. In this thought, religious is shown as a system of human actions. In this thought, religion is shown as a system of actions which seek interaction between fragmentation of scientific and theological language. Bellah doesn't deny this case that one way of perceiving neutral symbols is possible through testable empirical perceived hypothesis. Symbolic realism can increase a part of perception with rejecting separation of subject and object (Klausner, 1970: 100).

### Symbolic realism realistic trick in artistic and literary style

Symbolic realism is formed as a signifying system which represents reality and discusses it in three levels of material, meaning and meaning of meaning; such as the example of fog in hidden house of Dickens literally, "Vapor condenses in the air" in contract meaning and "The ambiguity and blindness in space and concerned scene characters" in secondary meaning show three meaningful levels of word "fog"; in fact, it has to be said that this technique has multiple nature, we face two layers in it: external layer and internal one, external layer is originated from real world in its materialistic meaning and in its symbolic and hidden layer, bewildering complexity of reality gets mind of the reader to the depth; therefor meaningful signifying involve more than the thing which is pictures and gives a new attitude which is not perceivable simply. In reader's point of view, symbolic realism has removed the distance between experiences and interpretation; meaning and existence are perceived in an imaginary movement and interpretation is re-created in reading process (Bright, 1985: 463). Meaningful pre-assumption of these symbolic signifiers more than having cultural communicational, historical, mythical, political, social and even emotional aspects, are perceivable in conceptual network of work that depending on individual mind empirical level can come

1. bellah 1964: 24, Madsen et.al.2001:5) p 5

2. Bellah,et.al ,2006:9)

3. (Durkheim 1995:2, Bellah 1970b:92) p 8

to mind. In literal and artistic works, although writers and artists in this technique use myths, secrets and public beliefs and known symbols as back up for their symbols, but their main technique is in using the realest shape of social symbols or individual ones that there is reality show in its both sides. In this approach, writers and artists go from direct picturing of external realities toward deeper and more internal realities and takes reader's mind to deconstruction hidden under layers of work and open beneath world of reality in front of sights; symbols are used as natural parts of realities and are consistent with external reality and sometimes are expressed with low distance of that; in fact symbols go in work's surface realistically and get new meaning in depth; therefor symbols strengthen concept and increase it not transfer it (Perin, 2008:93). As Chris Brooks<sup>1</sup> believes in this approach "artist pictures world realistically in one time and interpret a meaning of world symbolically<sup>2</sup> (Bright, 1985: 463). Finally reader get involved not with photographed image of the scene but with a multi-dimensional image of work's atmosphere and look for its second half in himself, mind and emotion to complete it. This multiple and symbolic use of reality helps growth and retraining social realities and reconstruct the facts in the community. In "signs for the time" criticism, Jackman has said that "Brooks shows that in descriptions or narrations writer describes aspects of the world which are reminded in an obvious way and there are spiritual and world aspects contradictorily (Jackman, 2014: 107).

Symbolic realism in this field is created from integrating two heterogeneous thinking means realism and symbol-orientation<sup>3</sup> that finally has realistic approach. In this kind of realism, symbols are used that both sides of symbol either real or objective signifier and secondary arbitrary signified have social and realistic

history and crystallize the atmosphere of the community; in this expression, symbol more than being symbolism is symbolic; in this time, symbolism movement wasn't formed seriously in its school meaning in France and was looking for finding an independent identification for itself. Integrating symbols and realism in this technique is like magic and realism (magic realism) in fact is equivalent agreement where while showing materialistic realities in that word has symbolic meaning as well. Integrating these two aspects are shown completely realistic and non-artificial. Symbolic use of characters, events, words and symbolic processes and routine life events are included very naturally. In this kind of realism, known symbols in their territory, myths, secrets and mysteries and public beliefs are used but they are not focused; in fact realistically they enter social and self-construct symbols into it in accordance with the atmosphere of the text (Jackman, 2014:108) and this is temptations of familiarity boundaries between art and life and unity of reality and dream boarder.

As it was mentioned symbolic realism was used in the field of novel. In stories with symbolic realism, symbols are taken from routine life's realities and also local myths, native history and people informal beliefs. Some samples in our novel literature can be mentioned in this field. Sadegh Choobak (1916-1997) is introduced as a primer writer in these kinds of stories but before him, some writers such as Bozorg Alavi (1903-1996) in "Gilehmard" (1931) and Sadegh Hedayat (1902-1951) in "Darkroom" can be named. The other samples of story techniques, "Ghafas", "Adl" "Antari ke Lootiash mordeh bood" "Etma sage man" from Sedegh Choobak, "Goldasteha and Falak" from Jalal Al Ahmad (1923-1969) and "Raghse marg" from Bozorg Alavi can be mentioned.

1. *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid- Victorian word*. By Chris Brooks, London (mar,1985) (pp 463-465)

2. *Signs for the Times: Symbolic Realism in the Mid- Victorian word*. By Chris Brooks, London (mar,1985)

3. t doesn't mean symbolism.

## Conclusion

Noticing symbol first was discussed in field of religion and then in art and mysticism and religious and fictional texts were considered as the first demonstrations of symbolism. Symbolic realism as an artistic technique was used in literacy, painting and architecture fields in mid-nineteenth century; in symbolic realism not only work is produced mediating imagination power but also influence on its reality and time, in this kind we can see the integration of two contradictory parts of existing and meaning which both are united based on reality and are pictured in mind. In this time, art is either can be seen as a perceivable thing in work's surface or a source of meanings in symbolic shape. Therefor object pictures arbitrary meaning with word and symbolic meaning simultaneously and in fact two realities are discussed at the same time; objective reality and mental reality. Considering symbolic aspect signifier proposes more than what it shows and the other half is pictured and discovered by receiver considering mind's empirical structure as well as text realities. Therefor in this method art, imaginary, life and reality joined each other to motivate feeling toward better perception. Symbolic realism was discussed particularly in literature and it can be mentioned as a style feature in a realistic work analysis, this style feature have been less paid attention in most of realistic analyses of realistic works that with accomplishing this research, we hope to observe constructive approach in this rout and literature and style analyzers pay attention to this realistic feature in works.

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