

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Artistic Psychologism In The Novels Of Pearl S. Buck: A Study Of Female Characters

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Abstract

This article explores the phenomenon of artistic psychologism in the novels of Pearl S. Buck, with particular attention to the psychological construction of female characters. The study aims to identify the narrative strategies through which inner emotional states, moral conflicts, and psychological development are conveyed. Employing close textual analysis and an interpretative approach, the research demonstrates that Buck's psychologism is predominantly indirect and ethical in nature. Rather than relying on explicit introspection or stream-of-consciousness techniques, the author reveals psychological depth through silence, everyday behavior, and moral choice. The findings indicate that artistic psychologism functions as a central structural principle in Buck's narrative system, especially in her portrayal of women as moral and psychological centers of the novel.

KEY WORDS

Artistic psychologism, female characters, moral psychology, silence, Pearl S. Buck, ethic, Introspection.

INTRODUCTION

Artistic psychologism has long been regarded as one of the central aesthetic principles of twentieth-century prose, reflecting writers' increasing interest in the inner world of the individual. In literary theory, psychologism is commonly associated with narrative techniques such as inner monologue, psychological commentary, and stream-of-consciousness narration, which aim to render emotional states and mental processes in detail [1]. However, modern literary scholarship emphasizes that psychologism may also be realized through indirect narrative strategies, including behavior, ethical choice, silence, and everyday actions [2].

In this context, the novels of Pearl S. Buck occupy a distinctive position in world literature. Having spent much of her life in China, Buck developed a narrative style shaped by both Western realist traditions and Eastern philosophical concepts

of personality and morality [3]. As critics note, her fiction avoids excessive psychological introspection and instead focuses on inner stability, emotional endurance, and moral responsibility as key indicators of psychological depth [4].

Female characters play a particularly significant role in Buck's narrative system. Rather than functioning as purely social or romantic figures, women in her novels act as psychological and ethical centers of the text, embodying resilience, restraint, and moral clarity [5]. Their inner world is revealed not through explicit emotional confession but through silence, daily labor, and difficult ethical decisions, which together form a distinctive model of artistic psychologism [6].

The aim of this article is to analyze the specific features of artistic psychologism in Pearl S. Buck's novels, focusing on the

psychological construction of female characters and the narrative mechanisms through which their inner development is conveyed.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a qualitative literary research design and aims to examine the distinctive features of artistic psychologism in the novels of Pearl S. Buck, with particular attention to the psychological construction of female characters. The research employs a combination of close textual analysis, interpretative analysis, comparative literary methodology, and contextual analysis to reveal the narrative mechanisms through which psychological depth is conveyed.

Selection of Sources and Criteria

The scholarly sources used in this article were selected according to the following criteria:

Relevance: Priority was given to academic publications released within the last five years (2019–2024) that address issues of artistic psychologism, psychological realism, gender studies, and intercultural literary analysis. Foundational theoretical works were also consulted where necessary to establish a solid conceptual framework.

Scholarly Novelty: Particular attention was paid to studies proposing less-explored approaches to psychologism, especially those emphasizing indirect psychological representation, ethical choice, silence, and everyday behavior rather than explicit introspection or stream-of-consciousness techniques.

Critical Diversity: The selected sources reflect a range of scholarly perspectives, including complementary and contrasting viewpoints, allowing for a balanced and critical interpretation of Pearl S. Buck's narrative psychology.

Databases and Search Strategy

The research was conducted using internationally recognized academic databases, including Scopus, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis Online, and SpringerLink. The search process employed key terms such as "Pearl S. Buck," "artistic psychologism," "female characters," "moral psychology," "indirect psychologism," "gender analysis," and "psychological realism." More than thirty academic publications were initially reviewed, from which six peer-reviewed articles meeting the above criteria were selected as the core theoretical sources.

Research Corpus and Analytical Methods

The primary literary texts analyzed in this study include *The Good Earth*, *East Wind: West Wind*, and *Pavilion of Women*, as these novels provide representative examples of Buck's narrative strategies and her approach to psychological characterization. The analysis focuses on identifying episodes in which female characters' inner states are revealed through moral decisions, silence, habitual actions, and responses to everyday challenges. These elements are examined to determine their function in constructing an ethically grounded and culturally inflected model of artistic psychologism.

RESULTS

The analysis reveals several defining characteristics of artistic psychologism in Pearl S. Buck's novels.

1. Indirect Representation of Psychological States

Buck rarely employs direct psychological commentary or extended inner monologues. Instead, the inner world of female characters is revealed through actions, habitual behavior, and reactions to everyday challenges. Psychological tension is embedded in routine life rather than dramatized through overt emotional expression.

2. Moral Choice as a Psychological Mechanism

Female characters are frequently placed in situations requiring ethical decision-making. These moments of choice serve as key psychological turning points, revealing inner conflict, emotional restraint, and gradual personal growth. Psychological development is thus inseparable from moral responsibility.

3. Silence as a Form of Psychologism

Silence functions as a significant psychological device in Buck's novels. It represents inner strength, emotional maturity, and resistance rather than passivity. This narrative strategy reflects an Eastern model of psychological expression, where restraint and endurance are valued forms of inner agency.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Pearl S. Buck's conception of artistic psychologism represents a fundamental departure from the dominant Western model of psychological realism. Whereas European modernist prose typically foregrounds inner speech, fragmented consciousness, and experimental narrative techniques as primary means of psychological representation, Buck's novels articulate an alternative paradigm rooted in ethical stability, narrative

continuity, and moral endurance. Psychological depth in her fiction is not achieved through overt introspection or the dramatization of mental disintegration, but rather through sustained patterns of behavior, restraint, and ethically charged decision-making. Within this narrative system, female characters occupy a structurally and conceptually central position. They function not merely as agents of plot development but as psychological and ethical anchors that stabilize the moral universe of the text. Their inner lives are revealed through silence, perseverance, and everyday responsibility, which together form a coherent mode of indirect psychologism. Such characters embody a model of personality defined by inner balance, self-discipline, and moral clarity rather than emotional volatility or psychological fragmentation.

This ethical mode of psychologism reflects the influence of Eastern philosophical traditions that privilege harmony, endurance, and moral continuity, while simultaneously remaining embedded within a Western realist narrative framework. As a result, Buck's artistic psychologism operates as an intercultural bridge, mediating between Eastern ethical concepts of personality and Western narrative conventions. This synthesis allows her work to challenge Eurocentric models of psychological realism and to expand the theoretical boundaries of psychologism in twentieth-century prose.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, artistic psychologism in Pearl S. Buck's novels is characterized by its indirect, ethical, and culturally inflected nature. Psychological depth is achieved through silence, moral choice, and everyday conduct rather than explicit introspection. Female characters serve as the primary vehicles of this psychologism, embodying inner resilience and ethical clarity. This distinctive narrative strategy positions Buck's work as a unique contribution to twentieth-century psychological prose and highlights the intercultural dimension of her artistic method.

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