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THE REPRESENTATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL STATES THROUGH CHARACTER PORTRAITURE IN ENGLISH FICTION

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Abstract. This article examines literary portrait as a linguistic and artistic means of representing characters in English literary texts. It discusses the main components of portrait description, the language resources used in its construction, and its contribution to characterization. Particular attention is given to the representation of physical appearance, facial expressions, gestures, posture, and clothing. The article also considers the relationship between outward appearance and psychological interpretation, emphasizing the role of context and narrative perspective. A descriptive and analytical approach is adopted to explain how portrait details guide readers' perceptions and contribute to the development of a character's image. The discussion suggests that literary portrait functions as a flexible textual resource whose meaning emerges through the interaction of description, evaluation, and narrative organization.

Keywords: literary portrait, English literary text, characterization, physical appearance, stylistic devices, psychological representation, narrative perspective.

INTRODUCTION.

The creation of a character is a central aspect of literary representation. Writers construct fictional individuals through their actions, speech, thoughts, relationships, and appearance. Literary portrait contributes to this process by giving a character a visible presence within the fictional world. Through descriptions of facial features, bodily characteristics, clothing, and movement, a text provides readers with details from which they construct a mental image.

The significance of literary portrait extends beyond the representation of physical appearance. A descriptive passage may communicate an emotional state, suggest a social position, reveal an observer's attitude, or establish expectations about a character's behaviour. Even a brief reference to a facial expression or gesture can influence the interpretation of an interaction.

The study of literary portrait therefore requires attention to the relationship between language and interpretation. Physical details acquire meaning through the vocabulary used to describe them, their position in the narrative, and the perspective from which they are presented. An apparently straightforward description may contain admiration, criticism, uncertainty, or irony.

The aim of this article is to provide a general account of literary portrait in English literary texts, focusing on its structural components, linguistic features, and principal narrative functions.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH. The article adopts a descriptive and conceptual approach. It organizes the discussion around three interconnected aspects: the content of portrait description, its linguistic realization, and its contribution to characterization. No individual literary work or bounded corpus is selected for analysis. Accordingly, the discussion presents an analytical framework rather than findings about the frequency or distribution of portrait features.

The examples provided below are constructed for explanatory purposes and are not quotations from published literary works.

Literary portrait can be understood as the verbal representation of a character's outward appearance and visible bodily expression. Its components may include the face, eyes, hair,

complexion, figure, clothing, posture, gestures, and manner of movement. These elements establish a character's physical presence and may also become relevant to the interpretation of personality and emotion.

Literary portrait forms part of characterization, although the two concepts are not identical. Characterization encompasses the full range of textual means through which a character is constructed. Portrait refers more specifically to visible features and their representation. A statement about a character's moral beliefs, for instance, belongs to characterization but becomes part of portrait only when connected to outward appearance or bodily expression.

Portrait description is selective. A writer does not need to provide a complete account of every physical feature. One distinctive detail may be sufficient to make a character recognizable or direct attention to an important aspect of a scene. The choice of detail is therefore closely related to its textual purpose.

A further distinction concerns description and interpretation. A text may identify a visible feature, such as a lowered head, and then associate it with embarrassment or submission. However, the physical detail does not possess one fixed meaning. The surrounding situation determines whether the interpretation is convincing.

Physical appearance provides the most immediately recognizable material for portrait construction. Descriptions of age, height, facial structure, hair, and complexion help distinguish one character from another. These features may be presented briefly or developed through an extended passage.

Facial expressions introduce a more changeable dimension. A smile, a frown, tightened lips, or raised eyebrows can register a response to a particular event. Such details connect appearance with the unfolding interaction and allow the portrait to develop alongside the narrative.

Gestures and posture similarly place the body within a situation. A character may lean forward, turn away, fold their arms, or remain unusually still. These movements can contribute to the representation of interpersonal distance, hesitation, attention, or tension. Their significance depends on how they relate to speech and action.

Clothing and accessories provide another layer of description. Their condition, style, and suitability for a particular occasion can contribute to the representation of occupation, circumstances, taste, or self-presentation. These associations require contextual interpretation: worn clothing, for example, may reflect poverty, demanding work, personal preference, or a temporary situation.

The descriptive voice may bring several components together. A portrait can move from general appearance to individual features, or it can begin with one striking detail and gradually expand. The order of presentation influences which characteristics readers notice first and retain most clearly.

The lexical organization of literary portrait often centres on nouns referring to the body and adjectives specifying visible qualities. Nouns identify the object of description, while modifiers provide information about shape, colour, size, texture, and expression.

Consider the constructed sentence:

His narrow face remained motionless, but his fingers tightened around the edge of the chair.

The sentence combines facial description with a bodily action. The apparent stillness of the face is placed beside a movement that may suggest tension. The psychological effect emerges from the relationship between the details rather than from an explicit statement about the character's feelings.

Evaluative vocabulary adds a further dimension. Words such as graceful, awkward, gentle, or

severe communicate an interpretation of appearance. Such vocabulary raises an important analytical question: whose judgment does the description express? It may belong to the narrator, another character, or the person describing themselves.

Verbs contribute movement and direction. Verbs of looking, turning, trembling, smiling, or withdrawing connect portrait with action. Verbs of perception and expressions such as seemed or appeared can also indicate that a description represents an impression rather than an established fact.

Syntactic organization shapes the descriptive effect. Enumeration allows several features to accumulate within one passage. Parallel constructions can give comparable prominence to different details. Short sentences may isolate a striking feature, while longer structures can combine observation with qualification or commentary.

Stylistic devices enable portrait description to communicate associations beyond literal appearance. Epithets can combine physical observation with emotional evaluation, directing readers towards a particular impression.

Comparison makes a feature more vivid by relating it to another object or experience. A comparison may emphasize delicacy, rigidity, speed, or vulnerability. Its meaning depends on the qualities activated by the surrounding context.

Metaphor can transform a bodily feature into a broader image. Describing a face as a mask, for instance, may suggest concealment or emotional control. This interpretation becomes stronger when the narrative establishes a difference between the character's visible expression and private response.

Contrast is particularly useful in portrait construction. A composed face may accompany restless hands, or elegant clothing may appear alongside exhausted movement. Such combinations complicate the image and invite readers to consider tensions within the character's situation.

Repetition can make a portrait detail recognizable across a text. A recurring gesture or expression may acquire additional significance as circumstances change. The same smile, for example, can be interpreted differently depending on who observes it and what has occurred.

Literary portrait contributes to psychological representation by connecting visible behaviour with possible inner experience. Instead of directly naming an emotion, a text may describe its bodily manifestations and allow readers to interpret them.

This process requires caution. A blush does not always indicate embarrassment, and silence accompanied by stillness does not necessarily express calmness. Physical details may support several interpretations. Their meaning becomes clearer through the immediate situation, the character's speech, and information supplied elsewhere in the narrative.

A useful distinction can be made between relatively stable characteristics and temporary expressions. Facial structure belongs to a more enduring physical image, whereas a trembling mouth or a sudden change in posture represents a particular moment. Treating a momentary expression as proof of a permanent personality trait can oversimplify the text.

Portrait description may also reveal a difference between outward behaviour and inward experience. A character can maintain a controlled expression while experiencing distress. When readers have access to that distress, the portrait becomes meaningful through the tension between what is visible and what is known.

Every portrait is presented from a position within the narrative. The identity of the observer affects which details are selected and how they are evaluated. A sympathetic observer may notice signs of fatigue or vulnerability, while a hostile observer may interpret the same appearance as weakness.

First-person narration makes this relationship especially visible because descriptions are

connected to a particular consciousness. The narrator's knowledge, emotions, and interests shape the portrait. Third-person narration can also organize description around a character's perspective, allowing personal judgments to enter the narrative.

Consequently, portrait description can characterize two individuals simultaneously: the person being observed and the observer. Admiring or dismissive language may reveal as much about the perceiving consciousness as about the visible subject.

This distinction is important when discussing authorial evaluation. A negative description voiced by a character cannot automatically be treated as the author's own judgment. Its function must be considered in relation to the wider narrative.

Literary portrait performs several interconnected functions. It identifies characters by providing memorable details and differentiating them within the fictional world. It also contributes to characterization by linking appearance with behaviour, relationships, and self-presentation.

Its psychological function involves the representation of bodily responses associated with emotion. Its social function concerns the contextual meanings attached to dress, manners, and physical presentation. Its evaluative function emerges through the attitudes expressed by the descriptive language.

Portrait may also have a compositional role. A description can introduce a character, interrupt an interaction at a significant moment, or mark a change in circumstances. When a recurring detail connects different stages of a narrative, it contributes to continuity and development.

These functions need not occur separately. A single descriptive passage may establish identity, communicate an observer's attitude, and prepare the reader for an important interaction.

CONCLUSION. Literary portrait is a significant resource for representing characters in English literary texts. Its construction involves the selection and organization of physical features, clothing, expressions, gestures, and movement. Through lexical choice, syntax, and stylistic devices, these visible details acquire emotional and evaluative significance.

The interpretation of portrait depends on context and narrative perspective. An outward feature does not independently establish a character's personality or moral qualities. Readers must consider who observes the feature, how it is described, and how it relates to the character's actions and circumstances.

A general approach to literary portrait should therefore connect physical representation with the wider process of characterization. Examining these relationships helps explain how descriptive language creates a visible image while guiding, complicating, or revising readers' understanding of a fictional person.

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