厦门大学

硕 士 学 位 论 文

The Duet of Reality and Fantasy:
The Interfusion of Realism and Postmodernism in
Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*

现实与幻想的合奏：
菲利普·罗斯的《鬼作家》中现实主义和后现代主义的融合

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专 业 名 称：英语语言文学

论文提交日期：2 0 0 7 年 4 月

论文答辩时间： 年 月

学位授予日期： 年 月

答辩委员会主席：_____

评 阅 人：_____

200 年 月

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Synopsis

Philip Roth is one of the most controversial writers in contemporary American literature. While some commentators view his work as anti-Semitic, obscenity bordering on pornography, and self-indulgence, others laud Roth's skill of exuberance, inventiveness and his fantastic humor. In my view, Roth's complexity lies in a variety of narrative methods adopted in his works as well. Throughout his career Roth has experimented with narrative methods producing fiction that has grown increasingly sophisticated and technically interesting. *The Ghost Writer* is one of the best examples in which Philip Roth experiments with the interfusion of two modes of writing. By analyzing this representative work, this thesis intends to explore the embodiment of the realistic mode of representation and the postmodern narrative strategies in the novel and the aesthetic effects achieved through the interfusion of the two seemingly exclusive modes of writing, namely, the comic effect and the magnifying effect.

The thesis consists of four chapters plus an "Introduction" and a "Conclusion".

Chapter One defines the literary terms relating to the discussion of the novel, namely, realism, postmodernism, intertextuality, decanonization and metafiction, whose definitions are inspired by Damian Grant, Edmund Smyth, Gerard Genette, Michael Riffaterre, Ihab Hassan and Mark Currie respectively.

Chapter Two focuses on the embodiment of realism in the novel, namely the representation of the two main characters: Lonoff and Zuckerman and their arts through the realistic methods: banal and generalized shared experience, first-person voice, description of physical appearance and mannerism of characters and specific and concrete settings. The thesis perceives the sharp contrast between the lives and arts they pursue. Lonoff alienates himself from the turbulent outside world and sacrifices ordinary human pleasure to live an immaculate life and fashion an art of impersonalization. By contrast, Zuckerman's life is exuberant, full of turbulence, and his art is full of references. In his eyes, the ordinary human pleasure provides resources and inspirations for art. Lonoff's perfect art is actually an art of stillness and changelessness. He pursues the art of impersonation with the tension between the original and the disguise.

Chapter Three discusses the embodiment of intertextuality, decanonization and metafiction in the novel. Through intertextuality, Roth cunningly integrates into the novel Henry James's "The Middle Years", James Joyce's *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and Anne Frank's *The Diary of Anne Frank*. He also refers to Henry James's "The Author of Beltrafio" and Franz Kafka's "The Hunger Artist". By rewriting the ending of the classic *The Diary of Anne Frank*, Roth decanonizes the Jewish Saint Anne Frank into an ordinary girl, Amy Bellette, who treats art instrumentally and violates some moral values. The characters' criticism of works and the meta-narrative all expose the text's own metafictionality. And through integrating his personal experience into the novel, Roth exhibits Zuckerman's art of impersonation personally and challenges the traditional understanding of the relation between art and life.

Chapter Four points out the aesthetic effects achieved through the interfusion of realism and postmodernism in *The Ghost Writer*. Realism's aesthetic effect--life-likeness is seemingly antipathic with postmodernism's fantasy. But the conflict between them just endows the novel with the comic effect. Meanwhile, through the combination of the realistic representation and intertextuality, it achieves the magnifying effect. In a sense, this novel is not about just one or two artists but about a group of artists. It concerns itself with their common problems, vexations, and virtues, and what qualities they should have to live a true artistic life.

In conclusion, this thesis suggests that the complexity of the current situation and the cruel reality writers confront are the reasons why Roth interfuses two seemingly exclusive modes of writing in his novel. He informs us that the complexity and variety of the current cultural situation can no longer be represented by any single mode of writing but by a hybrid--a mixture of modes in which the relations between various narratives are cunningly negotiated.

Key Words: Interfusion; Realism; Postmodernism.

中文摘要

当今文坛对菲利普·罗斯的评价可谓是褒贬不一。一些评论家认为他的作品充斥着反犹，色情和自我放纵， 但也有批评家赞赏他作品中丰富的内容，不凡的幽默和新颖的表现手法。我认为他作品的复杂性也在于多种叙述方法的应用。我们可以毫不夸张地说罗斯一生都在实验各种叙述方法。《鬼作家》就是最好的例子。通过分析这部有代表性的作品，本文探究了现实主义写作模式和后现代叙述策略在小说中的体现以及它们的融合所产生的喜剧和放大效果。

本文由六部分构成，前言对全文进行总体介绍，结语部分综述全文。

第一章界定与分析文本有关的文学术语， 即现实主义、 后现代主义、 互文性、去经典、 元小说。这些定义分别参考了达米安·格兰特、埃德蒙德·史密斯、吉拉尔·热奈特、麦克·里法特尔、伊哈布·哈森和马克·柯里的理论。

第二章分析文本是怎样通过现实主义方法再现洛诺夫和朱克门两位作家和他们所追求的艺术。洛诺夫过的是苦行僧的生活，创作的是非人格化的艺术。然而朱克门的生活却是丰富多彩的，追求的是扮演的艺术。

第三章讨论互文性，去经典和元小说在文本中的体现。通过互文罗斯巧妙地把多位作家的作品嵌入到《鬼作家》中。而通过去经典—重写《安妮日记》的结局，罗斯打破了安妮作为犹太圣徒的形象。文中的评论语言和元叙述及罗斯和朱克门经历的相似引发的对生活和艺术的关系的讨论暴露了它的互文性。

第四章指出通过现实主义和后现代主义的融合文本所获得的艺术效果。现实和幻想的冲突造就了文本的喜剧效果。同时通过现实的再现和互文的相结合，文本又获得了放大的艺术效果。

结语说明了当代文化情景的复杂和作家所遭遇的残酷现实是导致罗斯在小说中融入两种相互排斥的写作模式的真正原因。他告诉我们当代文化情景的复杂性和多样性已不可能仅用一种写作模式来表达而需要融合多种写作模式。

关键词：融合；现实主义；后现代主义

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Introduction

Philip Roth is one of the most prominent writers in contemporary American literature. He first garners significant reaction with his first work, *Goodbye, Columbus*. With his following provocative and well-regarded novels, he quickly establishes himself as one of America's best-known authors. He has received several prestigious awards for his work, including two PEN/Faulkner Awards for fiction, a Pulitzer Prize, several National Book Critics Circle Awards, and a Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters from the National Book Foundation in 2002. The quantity and variety of critical opinion that greets each new book indicates Roth as a major contemporary writer. Philip Roth has produced an impressive body of fiction that has attracted widespread critical commentary. His ideas and his wit range widely. As a second generation Jewish immigrant, apart from the portrayal of Jewish life, his themes expand to political satire, the Holocaust, the individual's inner turmoil, the career of the artist, the process of fiction-making and the relation between life and art. Meanwhile, Roth is also one of the most controversial writers in contemporary literature. Since he published his first collection of short stories and a novella, *Goodbye, Columbus*, in 1959, the pattern of praise for the literary qualities of his work, coupled with criticism of his complex portraits of Jews, has continued throughout his career. On one hand, his works are hailed as fresh and original. The positive criticism includes his fantastic humor, adroit language, and psychological insight. On the other hand, the scatological content in some of his works and his harsh satiric portraits of Jews have inspired considerable critical debates and relentless attacks. Ironically these debates and attacks do not quench his thirst for realizing his aesthetic ambition but give rise to his series of works defending him, articulating his artistic concepts and showing his inventiveness, such as *The Ghost Writer, Reading Myself and Others, My Life as a Man, The Facts,* and other Zuckerman novels. In his interview with *The London Sunday Times* Roth answered the question--"So the charge of defamation started early on?"--with the following remarks:

> It started when I started. It has somewhat distinguished my career from most of my American colleagues. I was taken to be an inflammatory fellow when I

was still in my swaddling clothes. In its own strange way, the furor coming

right at the start probably has given my writing a direction and emphasis that

it might not have had otherwise. (Roth, *RMAO* 134)

But Roth will not just simply yell out: my works have been misread. He defends himself in a very skillful way instead. In the essay, "Document Dated July 27, 1969," a response to Diana Trilling's charges, he concludes that "May I suggest that perhaps the writer's view of life is more hidden from certain readers, […] more embedded in parody, burlesque, slapstick, ridicule, insult, invective, lampoon, wisecrack, in nonsense, in levity, in play […]" (Roth, *RMAO* 30-31).

The Ghost Writer, the novel I choose to analyze in this thesis, is one in which Roth hides his views of artists and art in a cunning way. What is the way? It is the interfusion of two seemingly anti-pathic modes of writing: realism and postmodernism. Roth brilliantly connects realism with postmodern fantasy in this novel. Clearly, he is deeply aware of the relationship between the rational and the irrational. Obviously he places great value upon the quality of dynamic opposition. An underlying sense of fundamental duality fuels Roth's literary imagination, and drives his marvelous novel. Roth is himself essentially a social realist, but "fantasy" occurs again and again as his powerful agent reflecting his style. He never gives up employing the traditional realistic mode in his writings, which has within all the modalities of possible fictions its own assured place, and simultaneously he adds experimental postmodern narrative strategies to face the more complicated reality.

On one hand, in the novel he employs the realistic representation methods: banal and generalized shared experience, first-person voice, description of physical appearance and mannerism of characters and specific and concrete settings to represent two types of writers, namely Lonoff and Zuckerman and in consequence two types of arts, namely the art of impersonalization and the art of impersonation. On the other hand, he also employs the postmodernist strategies: intertextuality, decanonization and metafiction to find his mouthpiece defending himself and articulating his aesthetic concepts.

But thanks to Roth's adept skill and outstanding wit, the two dynamic opposites are not exclusive from but in harmony with each other and interact to produce unique effects. Efforts will be made in this thesis to elaborate the embodiment of the two

writing modes in the novel respectively, namely realism and postmodernism, and probe how the two different modes of writing constantly challenge and question each other's authority but also remain dependent on one another and interactive with each other. In consequence, it creates its own original aesthetic effects owing to which the voice defending himself is more powerful as well as more ulterior, his viewpoints of artists, art and the relation between art and life are expressed more fully as well as more cunningly, and in consequence it might attain a permanent position in the artistic altar.

Now that the thesis intends to examine the interfusion of realism and postmodernism in *The Ghost Writer*, it might be better to start to view the two terms respectively.

Chapter One   Defining Literary Terms

1.1 Realism and Its Representation Methods

In the first sentence of *Realism*, Damian Grant indicates that the word "realism" must be surely "the most independent, most elastic, most prodigious of critical terms" (1). Then he lists twenty-six different kinds of realism by adding another qualifying word or words. All his efforts are to illustrate the chronic instability of the word. This thesis adopts the insights about realism made by Damian Grant in his *Realism* as one of the books of *The Critical Idiom* series edited by John D. Jump, for Damian Grant does not attempt to restrict readers to a definite and simple definition of realism but offers two directions in accordance with which readers can make their own choices.

He suggests a division between conscientious realism and conscious realism. In conscientious realism the assumption is that the reality is not identical with a work of art and is anterior to it. Realism, then, is a formula of art which, conceiving reality in a certain way, undertakes to present a simulacrum of it. Conscientious realism is identical with naïve realism or 19th century realism. Its purpose is to represent reality. It insists on the need of life-likeness and verisimilitude in representation. On the contrary in accordance with conscious realism reality is not anterior: reality in the artist's mind is always something created. Therefore the artist owns no menial service to it, there is nothing to correspond to and there is no reality outside the mind and the artist need not worry about the relationship. It pursues the realization of its own ontological status. This thesis adopts conscientious realism as the definition of realism.

Since in conscientious realism the world is susceptible of re-presentation in words, or in some other medium, the fiction is a formula of art which undertakes to present a simulacrum of it. The conscientious realists achieve the goal mainly by appealing to experience. It is experience, the novelistic simulacrum of the real-life variant, which informs the realistic life. So naïve realism owes its enduring vitality to the richness and variety of this experience it recreates. The experience plays a major role in the portrayal of a character in the fiction. Furthermore, the naïve realists do not attempt to distract us with an exotic subject matter, on the contrary, the more banal and generalized it is, the more intensified the "reality effect" is. So they just set characters

under ordinary conditions, show characters in the course of their everyday existence, average and changing, and propose to instruct readers by a perpetual analysis of feelings and of acts rather than to divert or move us by intrigue and exhibition of passions. Besides, in realistic fiction, there is often a narrator or implied author that is more or less stable. The narrator could be first person, omniscient third person or limited third person, among which the first person voice is the most powerful agent of conscientious realism. His observation (often in detail), remarks and thoughts have a prominent position in representing the experience and image of characters. And it is common in realistic fiction that the narrator and other characters will address each other as real persons have their conversations in their daily lives. Descriptions of physical appearances and mannerism and presentation of conversations are standard methods of characterization used by writers of realistic fiction. In consequence, in conscientious realism, the circumstances are specific and concrete and the characters are sentient and identifiable, psychologically and socially delineated. In this way the aesthetic effects--life-likeness and verisimilitude are fulfilled. And the reality effect is introduced with strong semantic and emotional resonance and arouses the sympathy of readers. What's more, owing to its banality and generality, as well as transparency and simplicity of means, it can invoke the sympathy of a wide range of readers, not only a small number of scholars.

1.2 Postmodernism and Its Narrative Strategies

A spectre is roaming through Europe: the Postmodern.

--PORTOGHESI, citing *Le Monde*, 1983

The word "postmodern" is thus, characterized, from its very inception, by an ambiguity.

--Thomas Docherty

[N]ot to mention countless other artists and thinkers of our moment--engage that overweening query, "What is postmodern?" engage and even answer it tacitly. In short, like a latter-day M. Jourdain, they have been speaking postmodernism all their lives without knowing it.

--Ihab Hassan

The first quotation indicates that there hardly is a single field of intellectual

endeavor which has not been touched by the spectre of the "postmodern". It seems fashionable to apply the word "postmodernism" indiscriminately to a variety of cultural, intellectual and social practices from architecture to biology, forestry, geography, history, law, literature, arts in general and so on. The other two quotations suggest that what is at issue in the postmodern would be an endless exercise to offer any simple definition of the term itself. Indeed, much argument arises over the question of precisely how the postmodern should be defined, yet no single definition has gained widespread currency or acceptance. It is evident that no consensus exists regarding either the parameters of postmodernism or the precise meaning of the term.

But it seems there is a relatively widespread attitude towards the question. As Edmund Smyth says,

> it is possible to identify broadly two distinct ways in which "postmodernism" has come to be used: first, to designate either negatively or positively the contemporary cultural condition as a whole in all its complexity; or, second, to describe a specific set of textual characteristics which can be gleaned from an analysis of selected literary, dramatic or cinematographic works. (9)

In the second sense, postmodernism designates an aesthetic style of diverse cultural productions (fiction, drama, films and so on), which exhibit some element of self-consciousness and reflexivity, fragmentation, discontinuity, indeterminacy, plurality, metafictionality, intertextuality, decentring, dislocation, and ludism. This is the definition under which this thesis intends to explore postmodernism embodied in *The Ghost Writer*. It will focus on intertextuality, decanonization and metafictionality.

As Manfred Pfister suggests, intertextuality is one of postmodern signs and at present they are synonyms (qtd. in Wang 128). This point is also perceived by Ihab Hassan who draws a chart in which he compares modernism with postmodernism and classifies intertextuality into postmodernism (Hassan 91). It seems that writers and critics have bestowed intertextuality a great deal of concern, but they don't give it a definite definition. In *The Study of Intertextuality*, the author refers to it as an unstable concept.

Julia Kristeva coins the word intertextuality and defines it as texts that more or less are created on the basis of other texts through citation, allusion, reference, pastiche,

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