

ATINER Institution:
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Literature

- **The Representation of the Unrepresented: The Study of Anita Brookner's Freeze-Frame Narrative in Her Novel *Hotel du Lac***

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Abstract

- This paper attempts to delineate how Anita Brookner's "freeze-frame" narrative in *Hotel du Lac* visualizes the internalized fears, desires and responses of female characters who are experiencing a lonely life. As a modern writer, Brookner adopts the objective and visual sight over more subjective narrative, for her realism is not for mere decoration but to transmit the quotidian things in order to externalize her characters' internal self without coloring them with romantic illusions. By recording the ordinary experiences and representing the material world she succeeds to depict how her female protagonist, Edith, undergoes the process of attaining self-awareness to confront her existential loneliness rather than escaping from it. This calculated method helps the reader to experience the fluid and instable reality through his/her eyes rather than mind and also contributes to the narrator's effort to "represent the unrepresented" world of women which is marred by a patriarchal society.

Anita Brookner

(16 July 1928 – 10 March 2016)



Introduction: Anita Brookner: A Modernist Author?

- Brookner's style is well-calculated and she is a the writer interested in expanding the possibilities of realism (Alexander Flora).
- This calculated method helps the readers to experience the fluid and instable reality through his/her eyes rather than mind.

- According to Liesl Olson , in *Modernism and Ordinary*, in the modernistic novels the everydayness is expanded not overlooked.
- Epiphany or the “magic moment” is not based on a transcendent, mystical but on the very ordinary.
- By capturing the facts and the routine details of life , the novelist succeeds to " create a palpable sense of what constitutes a person's life" (7), to highlight those moments and details which are taken for granted and "to represent the unrepresented".

- Brookner effectively captures a freeze-frame which not only does echo the spiritual paralysis and alienation of her female characters but also as Stetz puts it “characters stand frozen in their frames, enacting scenes that suggest Renaissance paintings of moral conflicts embodied in static tableaux” (36).

Novel: The Art of Verbal Painting

- The correlation between the art of the painter and that of the novelist exists in the fact that both attempt to represent reality with an “uncompromising visual focus” (Doherty 49)

The Significance Of The Quotidian

- Modernistic novelists' attention to descriptive details (especially of the body) is not for the sake of realist embellishment but as a means of communicating the visual, to get across an accurate depiction of the image they aim to represent, an image that is as fixed and unmovable as that of a painting.

- Ezra Pound, Joyce or Woolf privilege objective sight and the visual over other, more subjective, narrative means that “magnify an awareness of the self (such as epiphany, internal monologue etc.)” (Olson 3).

- The modernist novel treats the everyday with a new centrality, putting pressure on the notion of a coherent individual subject, and reconfiguring (but not rejecting) representations of temporality and material culture as crucial to a representation of character (Olson 18).

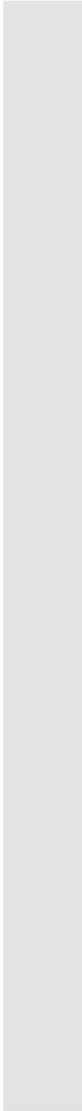
Discussion

- As a painter who paints nothing other than visual facts, Brookner prefers the visual through the evidence of her factual, opinion-free presentation of what characters see.
- Her choice to represent the “real” through vivid images and movements objectively serves to emphasize her allegiance to writing a visual experience of life.

HOTEL du LAC



ANITA BROOKNER

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- In this novel Brookner attempt to depict the inner desires, fears and frustrations of her female characters conflicting with the external social and cultural codes of behavior and conventions.

Spiritual Paralysis

- The oppression of the society and the inability of the individuals to achieve a self-autonomy lead them to a kind of paralysis.

The Setting And The Enviroment

- From the **window** all that could be seen was a receding area of **grey**. It was to be supposed that beyond the **grey** garden, which seemed to sprout nothing but the stiffish leaves of some **unfamiliar** plant, lay the vast **grey** lake, **spreading like an anesthetic** towards the **invisible** further shore, and beyond that, in imagination only, yet verified by the brochure, the peak of the Dent d'Oche, on which snow might already be slightly and silently falling (1).

Characters' Appearance And Performance

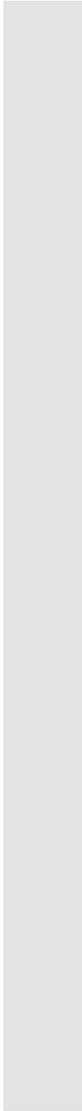
- The Hotel " a place guaranteed to provide a restorative sojourn for those whom life had mistreated or merely fatigued" (5) acts as an exile place for all its inhabitants who have been frustrated from the realities of their life.

- ...chewing steadily and without expression, had a curious way of taking her wine, in large gulps, as if rinsing her mouth out, and between courses would sit with her hands on the table, waiting for more. Edith could just see, embedded in her brownish fingers, small rings, one crested, but with the indentations worn away (14).

- As Helga Kurz puts it in her essay "irregular features, fatness, sick or crippled bodies or the symptoms of old age are scrutinized by the central woman character because they seem to vindicate her withdrawal from and dislike for her female vis-à-vis" (19).

Alienation

- Loss of identity is rooted in the anxiety and the loss of self-authenticity.
- Hotel du Lac "took a quite pride, and sometimes it was very quite indeed, in its isolation from the herd, knowing that it had a place in the memory of its old friends",
- Monica's holding the little dog "quivering with anxiety" with "the same boneless uncoiling movement"
- and Edith's fear of being with the others since "in any event, meals in public were not to her taste, even when she was accompanied"

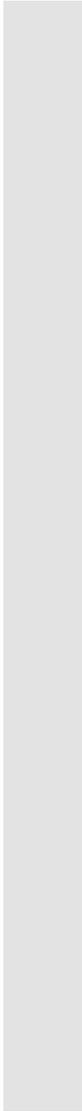
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- The visual details such as objects, food, places represent her psyche.
 - "...now I am reduced to pure tortoisedom, she thought, opening her eyes and gazing fearfully around the still deserted salon" (14).

The Magic Moment of Understanding

- As a romantic writer, Edith's main intention is to distance from all real circumstances , ironically this is the very daily life with its details which leads her to understanding.

- Edith: I mean that I cannot live *well* without it. I cannot think or act or speak or write or even dream with any kind of energy in the absence of love. I feel excluded from the living world. I become cold, fish-like, immobile. I implode. My idea of absolute happiness is to sit in a hot garden all day, reading, or writing, utterly safe in the knowledge that the person I love will come home to me in the evening. Every evening (53-54).
- Mr. Neville: your romanticism might keep rueful thoughts at bay for a time, but the thoughts would win out. And then you would discover that you had a lot in common with all the other discontented women" (55).

- " Edith felt the hair on the back of her neck begin to crepitate. She had told herself as much, many times, but had been able to dismiss her own verdict. Now she recognized the voice of authority" (55).
- Mr. Neville : " what you need, Edith, is not love. What you need is a social position. What you need is marriage" (55).

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- Edith attempts to reach an idealized self by ignoring the real self, by adopting herself to the standards and norms of the society.

- " And that door, opening and shutting, in her dreams, in her delusive waking moments, had been a real door, the reality and implications of which she had failed to take into account"(103).
- Facing the "reality" she is not that "romantic" woman anymore.
-Instead of resorting to the safe but conventional and paralyzing values of the patriarchal society, she prefers to accept her own existential loneliness.